

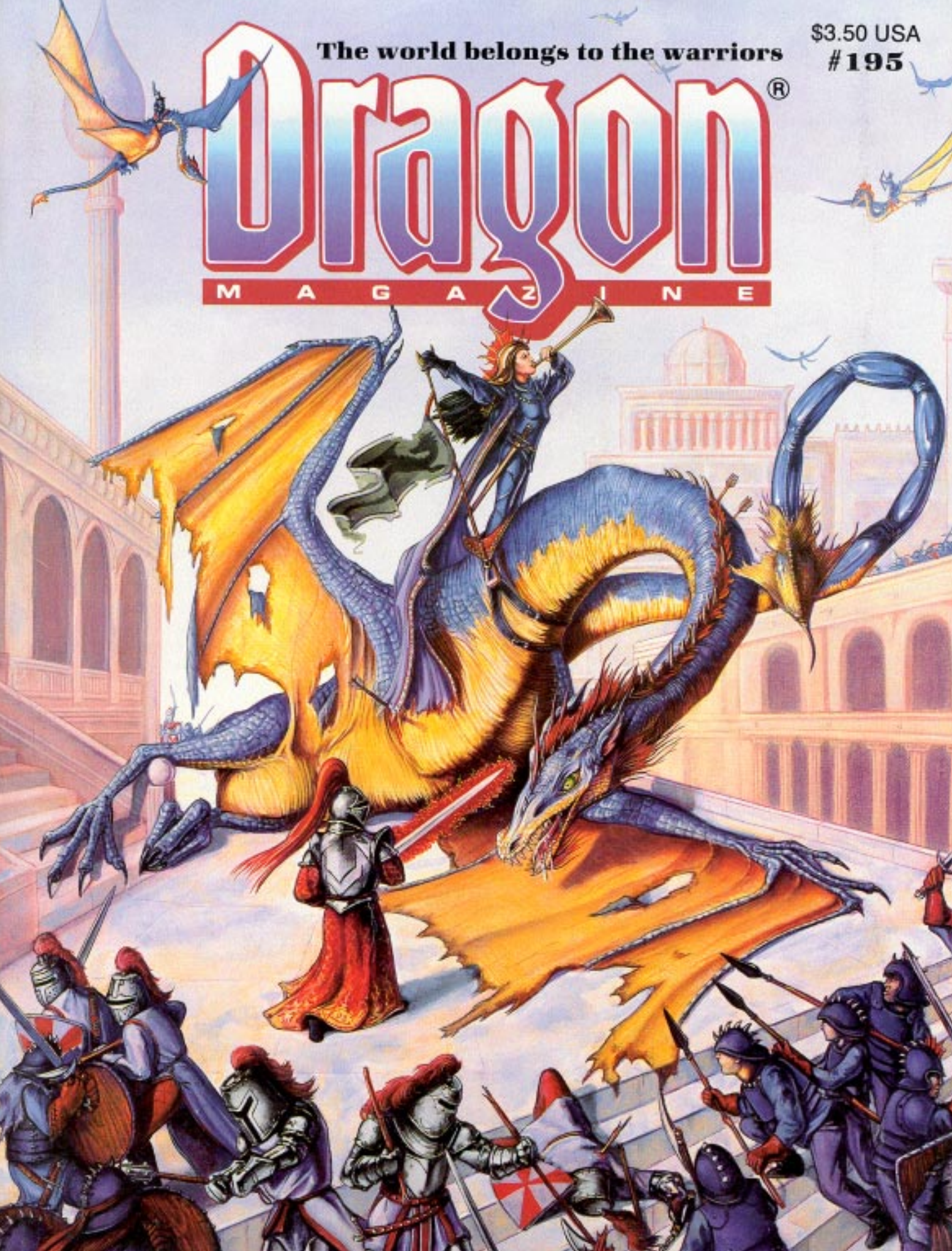
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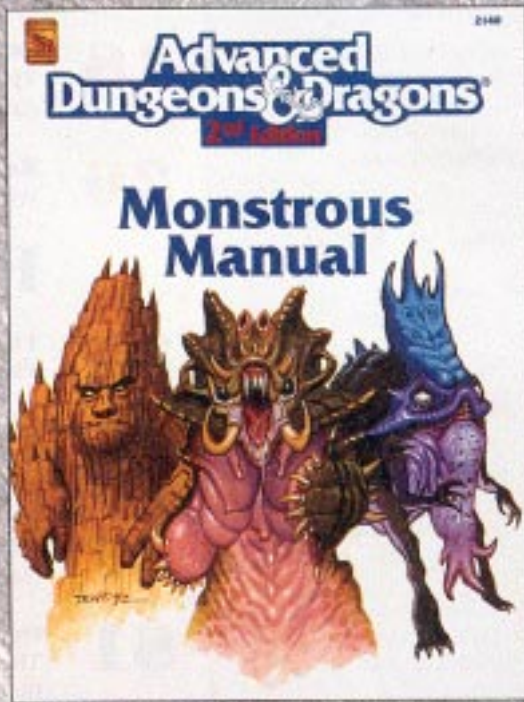
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COVER

A cavalier and her dragon land smack in the middle of trouble in Lissanne Lake's tribute to the warrior, which graces this issue's cover. But trouble, after all, is what a warrior's life is all about.

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LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

Misfits arise!

Dear Dragon,

Am I missing something? Are there any of you out there who play the D&D® or AD&D® game for the challenge of role-playing a misfit character? Does everyone but me role-play super (excuse me, I meant) SUPER CHARACTERS? Because dice are not kind to me when I roll them, my characters tend to be misfits. By this I mean that each has several low ability scores, and their high (not!) ones are—well, I think you get the picture. I found that playing a less-than-great character was actually a lot of fun. They rely on those nonweapon proficiencies they treasure a magical item, and gold (wow!) they treat like gold. Their goals? *Jus' stayin' alive!*

How come *they* never come into your office and chat for a while with the editor? Why do we hear only from fancy wizards and high-level bards? How about Rahlf, the paranoid sniveling rat of a thief; or Priscilla Goodbody, the homely, middle-aged, portly priestess; or Randolph, the rather good-looking, idealistic dwarf who dreams of someday being a paladin; or even Armond, who runs a very interesting curio shop? We may seldom save the day, but we keep the game interesting. It's time to scrape the bottom of the dungeon. Misfits arise! Let's hear from you.

P.S. How come there isn't any poetry in your magazine? How about a few heroic epics (D&D-style, of course), rousing drinking songs, and a few cute, short ditties? You are waxing a bit technical and dry at times. I realize it's old hat to you, but it is new stuff to us beginners. Loosen up, lighten up—it's supposed to be fun.

Good old Mom,
who is sometimes allowed to play
Roanoke VA

You're not missing anything, since my editorial for this issue was on pretty much the same topic you brought up: playing characters who aren't super-powered. The first two dozen characters I played in D&D and AD&D games were distinguished by: 1) their short life spans—five minutes, in one case; and 2) their wimpy character statistics. I tended to play gnomes, half-orcs, humans, and half-goblins who considered a score of 14 to be almost godlike. They were quite the lowlifes, and I loved 'em.

In DRAGON issue #193, the "Dungeoneering 101" article by Steven Schend featured an office

interview with a garrulous old adventurer named Essimuth—not anyone in Elminster's or Mordenkainen's class, but a man with something important to say. Some of the "Ecology" articles have centered around the comments and adventures of unremarkable or peculiar adventurers. We will doubtless have more such interviews in the future, though interviewers do find the high-level sorts to be more interesting.

As for your last question, we don't like to run poetry, but we do have fiction and cartoons. If we were to get a sudden flood of really funny material, we might be tempted to run it without waiting for April to come around (nudge, nudge—is anyone getting the hint out there?). We like to have fun, too, but we're editors and rarely have any. It's up to you, our readers, to help us out.

Bad DM! Bad DM!

Dear Dragon

You just might be an unfair DM if you hear these quotes

"He has a magic resistance of *what?*"

"You say we were completely surprised by a fifty-foot dinosaur hiding in that empty field."

"The thief stole my fighter's armor while he was wearing it?"

"Armed with only a silver belt buckle, my hero is surrounded by hordes of werewolves. . ."

"Well, you're right that Vulcan vampires do have their hearts in a different location."

Timothy Sallume
San Diego CA

Thanks for contributing to our "Unfair!" quotes file, started in the letters column of DRAGON issue #193.

A wizard's help

Dear Dragon

Here's my problem, and I hope that you can help me. I recently purchased the Wizard Spell Cards gaming aid from my local bookstore. I want to use the product, but the instructions do not explain what many of the symbols on the cards meant. Therefore, much of the playing value of the cards is lost to me. Is the information I need to know explained in any tome? Are my old hardcover AD&D books obsolete enough that they are incompatible with the product?

Your help and the guidance your publication has provided gamers over the years are truly appreciated.

James A. Beecher
Arvada CA

The Wizard Spell Cards errata was printed in DRAGON issue #179, page 92, and repeated on a special card inserted in the Priest Spell Cards box. Your old handbooks should still be useful in

most cases with the cards, but be aware that some changes were made to the spells of all classes in the transition from the AD&D 1st Edition to the 2nd Edition games.

Christian gamer

Dear Dragon,

I am a freshman here at Calvin College, which is a Christian college. I, as well as the college, believe that the Christian faith *must* be incorporated into *every* aspect of life. I am very interested in role-playing games. Have you heard of anyone else voicing this interest? If so, could you please tell me who and give me their addresses?

I have been looking high and low for anyone with this corresponding set of lifestyle (Christian) and interest (role-playing games). Please help if at all possible. I have searched for anyone for years (really!) Have you heard of anyone designing a Christian role-playing game? Thank you for your time.

Daniel S. Goodemoot
Room 361, Vanderwerp Hall
Calvin College
Grand Rapids MI 49546

There's your address, and we invite readers with similar interests to respond. I've met lots of role-players of many faiths, but none of them saw any conflict with that combination of "lifestyle" and "interest."

On the topic of Christian role-playing games, I've several times mentioned the DRAGONRAID® game. Produced by Adventure Learning Systems, Inc. in 1984, the game came in a large red box with very attractive components: a cassette with verbal rules, two crystal dice, LightRaider Handbook (a player's guide), New Player Briefing, Rulebook, Rescue of the Sacred Scrolls (an adventure). The LightRaider Test, Adventure Master Manual, and numerous handouts, maps, and worksheets. The game is no longer produced, making it a potentially valuable collector's item. Look for it at used-game auctions or in the bargain bins at hobby shops (Christian bookstores might even have it).

I had a phone conversation a few years ago with the game's publisher, who said that the game drew much criticism from Christian fundamentalists for the mere fact of being a role-playing game, which the critics believed made it unsuitable as an amusement. (A copy of "The Light Raider Newsletter," dated August 1986 and included with the game I have, complains: "Many Christian bookstores seem to be in the business of censoring what Christians read rather than making available a selection from which Christians can choose from their own conscience and walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.") Others in Christian education programs praised the game

Continued on page 7

SPACE IS BIG. LIFE IS HARD.

SHATTERZONE

THE UNIVERSE ISN'T JUST A GAME!

EDITORIAL

An extraordinary ordinary hero

I hope Michael Brown won't mind if I talk about Thora in this editorial, since she was his AD&D® game character, but Thora's sometimes on my mind and her story is worth telling.

Once upon a time, there was a fighter named Thora. Thora was a perfectly ordinary character. Her highest statistic was a 12, I think. She wasn't particularly strong, smart, good looking, or quick, but she was dependable, fair, and stuck up for her friends. We couldn't ask for much more than that. I thought of her as what an accountant would be like as an adventurer: pleasant and neat, but not very exciting.

Thora had an average amount of magical equipment and had reached a middle

level of experience in our campaign when a very unusual thing happened. The Dungeon Master (me) got hold of a copy of *Tegel Manor*, an old D&D® module published by a now-extinct company called Judges' Guild. Tegel Manor itself was a huge, rambling mansion on a windswept coast, abandoned and deserted by the living for many years. It had once belonged to a powerful, cursed family that had produced adventurers, criminals, and tyrants for centuries. When Thora got into a card game with the last survivor of that family, he put the deed to the estate in the pot and she won it. Thora now owned Tegel Manor and was free to move in any time—once she managed to clear out the undead.

See, the problem with Tegel Manor was

that every one of the *dead* members of that cursed family now lived on in the mansion in undead form. They came in every size, shape, and flavor, from lowly skeletons to ultrapowerful vampires and liches. There were scores of dead things in that manor, and they were killers. One room had over a dozen ghosts, and one of the liches was an archmage. They most definitely did *not* want to give up their home to a living person, and *especially* not to someone who wasn't even in their family tree. The cowardly survivor of the family had tried for years to get rid of his responsibility for the manor (he was good at losing card games), but everyone he'd given the deed to had later sought him out and forced him to take it back. "You didn't say anything about the vampires or



liches," they'd say in a peeved tone of voice, with most of their armor and clothes burnt off.

Everyone gave the manor back but *Thora*, that is. The first thing Thora did after the card game was paste a copy of the deed to the front of her +2 shield. The second thing she did was round up all her old adventuring friends and promise them low-cost housing in her manor if they'd help her clean it out a little bit first. The third thing she did was march into the manor and begin eviction proceedings against the current inhabitants.

Thora was always the first one into a room. The door would smash open as she threw her plate-mailed weight into it, then she'd hold up her shield and deed to the skull-like faces of the startled undead within and yell, "I'm the new landlord! Get out, or you're history!" The undead would disagree with her assessment of the situation, so Thora and a battalion of lords, wizards, master thieves, and high priests would pour into the room. After some of the most savage property negotiations we'd ever had, there'd be another room cleared out.

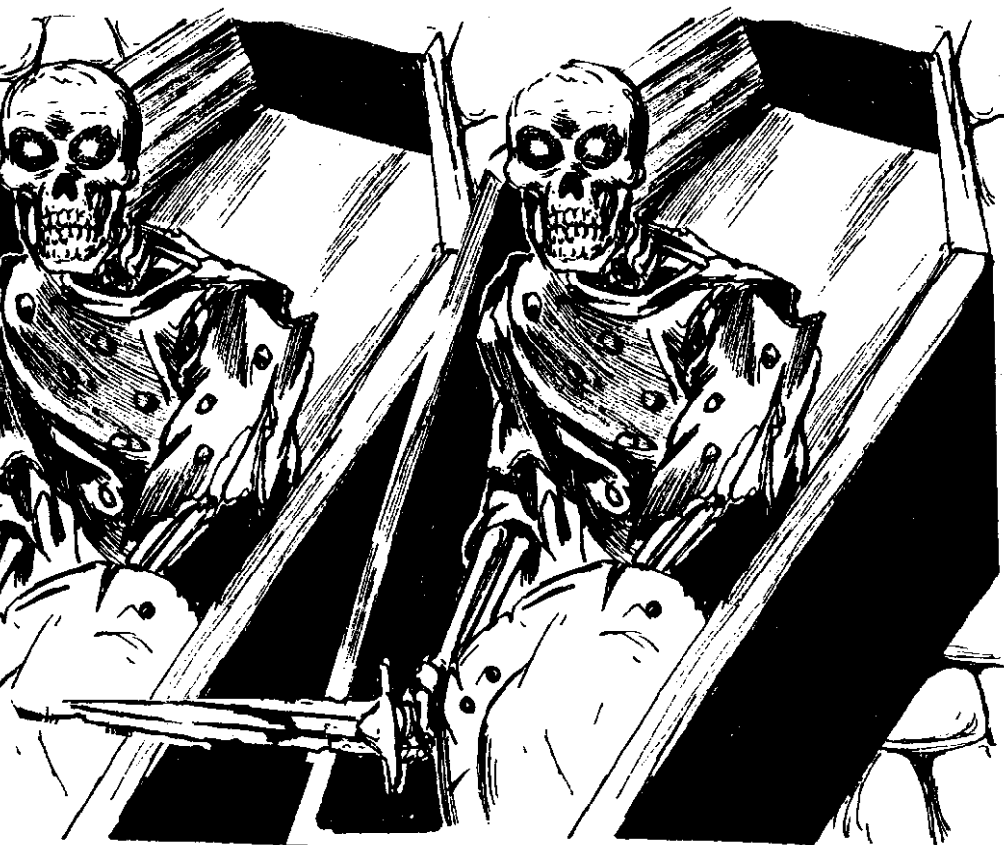
Thora would take a moment afterwards to make notes on her maps about redecorating, water pipes, where she would put the cafeteria, and so forth, then she'd lead the group to the next room. Tegel Manor was huge, but she managed to clean out about two-thirds of it before the campaign wandered on to another adventure. Everyone who survived the

eviction action was filthy rich. Thora moved in with a few other semi-retired adventurers, and soon she became famous as the landlord of the most dangerous condominiums in the land (they hadn't yet gotten rid of all the vampires in the basement, and the bloodrose outside sometimes ate visitors but she couldn't bear to part with it). She was a good landlord, too, very reliable.

Thora didn't have 18/00 strength or +6 battle armor, but she kicked butt and we admired her. I thought about her in an AD&D game I played a few years ago, and I made up a character that had no high statistics at all, just like her, but the group wouldn't let me use it. I was given a revised character with an 18/00 strength and 18 constitution. It just wasn't the same.

Thora, you were an average sort of character, but you were the most extraordinary ordinary hero I ever saw. Thanks for the memories. And good luck with the tenants in the basement.

Roger Moore



Letters

Continued from page 4

for its teaching of values and for serving as "an excellent biblical counterbalance to the flood of occult influence in our society."

The negative fundamentalist reaction is remarkable in view of the fact that the game itself is thoroughly grounded in Christian theology, at least as far as I can tell in looking over the copy in our library. (An appendix in the *Adventure Master's Manual* discusses witnessing to non-Christians.) The player characters are *LightRaiders*, humans who have been literally "born again" into a mythical world called *EdenAgain*. Game spells are cast by reading passages (*WordRunes*) from the Bible—e.g., The "What Now" *WordRune* is Psalm 119:66, which if recited allows a *LightRaider* to boost his Knowledge characteristic by 3 for one day.

Most *LightRaider* missions take them into the *Dragon Lands of Talaria*, dragons being the chief advocates of evil in the campaign. Goblins, giants, orcs, trolls, goblins, cave spiders, and other typical creatures could be met and fought, each representing a being with a particular flaw or favorite sin. I particularly like the fluster beast, which looks like a bear with two ostrich heads that argue with each other constantly. Dragons, however, get in-depth treatment, and their role as the corruptors and enslavers of *EdenAgain* is well cast and carefully worked out. Crystal, gaze, fluorescent, firedrake, dream, slime, shadow, rainbow, and sea serpent dragons exist, each with a dangerous mental power that can lead *LightRaiders* into committing sin (it's like the AD&D game's charm spell, but with even more punch).

The environment of *EdenAgain* reminds me of C. S. Lewis's *Narnia* novels. Even as an out-of-print game, it was a remarkable achievement, and it's worth a look from any serious game collector or game designer for its attempt to teach theology as part of its game mechanics.

As far as incorporating religion into every aspect of life—that's up to each gamer to decide. Despite my comments on the *DRAGONRAID* game, I have mixed feelings about putting a real-world religion into a game setting. I've seen a number of ardent Christian and Jewish paladins in AD&D game play, for instance, but PC religious choice makes no difference in the outcome of the game. Several of the AD&D 2nd Edition Historical References (HR1 Vikings, HR2 Charlemagne's Paladins, and HR4 A Mighty Fortress) discuss role-playing in medieval Europe's Christian societies. Modern world settings for espionage or warfare role-playing games would certainly allow for religious choice among PCs. Again, it's all a matter of what the gamers feel comfortable with.

Ω

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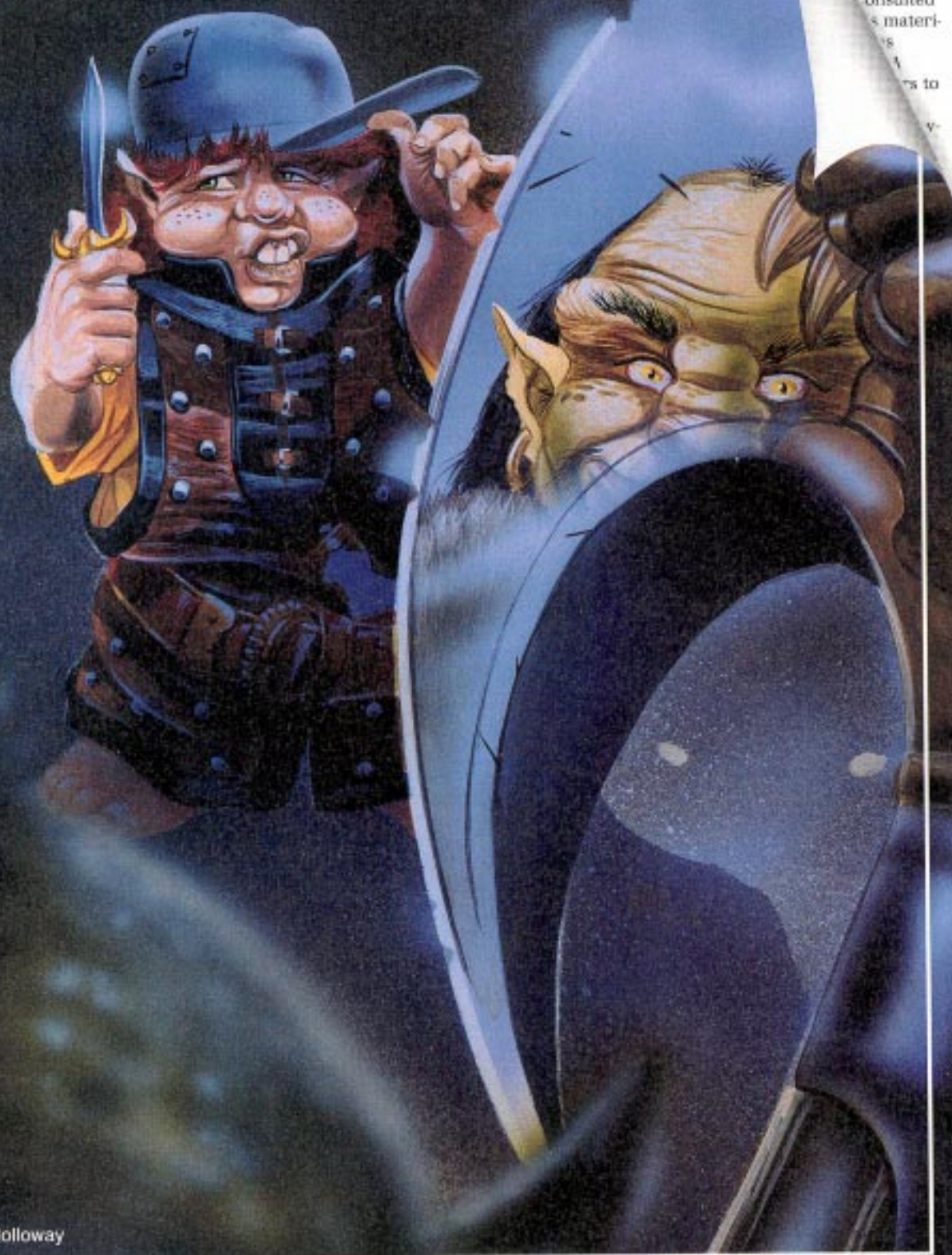
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So, You Want to be a Samurai?

Eastern role-playing clues for Western minds
in AD&D® Oriental campaigns

by Glenn S. Barnes

Artwork by James Holloway

Coloring by Stephen Sullivan



Artwork by John Stanko

The *Oriental Adventures* rules for the AD&D® 1st Edition game are a remarkable achievement for the breadth of material they attempt to integrate into a small, manageable, gaming package. Yet this very scope can be a source of confusion for the DM or player who may not be very familiar with the structure and character of the Japanese feudal system, from which the *Oriental Adventures* text and similar material for the AD&D game's Kara-Tur setting derive much of their flavor and content.

This lack of familiarity can be at best intimidating and at worst painfully frustrating for all those involved in a fledgling Oriental campaign. Soon the gaming group may find itself returning to the same old Western European haunts of the more traditional AD&D campaign, where

castles look like castles are supposed to look and the character classes have nice, easily pronounceable (if rather staid) names.

"But," protests the aspiring player of an Oriental adventurer, "I really do want to try my hand at playing a samurai character. The problem is, I know how to play a paladin or cavalier because I have some idea of the duties, responsibilities, and world of the historical knight of Europe. I don't know any of those things about a samurai."

The hypothetical player has a good point. Let's take a look at the samurai and his environment, background, and obligations, and maybe we'll figure out a few things about playing in and running an Oriental campaign in the process.

The samurai and society

The samurai class reached its apex of development and formalization during the Tokugawa Shogunate (1600-1867), during which the doctrine of *bushido* ("warrior way") was refined and codified. While we'll be examining that version of the samurai here, Tokugawa society as a whole is not an ideal model for use in AD&D. With its rigid social stratification, strict limits on travel, and strong discouragement of individual imagination and initiative, few players would find role-playing in an historical Tokugawa-style environment very appealing. Nevertheless, the very rigidity and stability of this era make it easy to draw specific elements from it for use in a campaign world. It is, in its way, almost a perfect model of hierarchical military rule.

In the social hierarchy of the Tokugawa period, the military class (*buke*) was pre-eminent, ranking above the Imperial court and nobles (*kuge*), the various religious orders, the commoners (*heimin*), and the outcasts (*eta*). Movement from one class to another, possible in pre-Tokugawa times, became virtually impossible under the strict laws of the Tokugawa period. Class was determined by birth, and individual ability or accomplishment was generally irrelevant.

With the military at the top of the pyramid, the samurai tended to be arrogant and even abusive toward the lower classes. Such contempt reached its most gruesome manifestation in the practice of "sword-testing murders" or "practice killings," wherein an innocent passerby of lower class would be ruthlessly struck down with a sword in order for a samurai to test the keenness of a new blade. Fortunately, the practice was not rampant, but a samurai was within his rights to kill a commoner with only the slightest pretext. DMs can exploit this attitude to great effect: Imagine the consternation of player characters who, after carefully disguising their party to pass among commoners, are forced to reveal their skills in the midst of a main street after being accosted by a gang of drunken samurai who have nothing better to do than find some excuse for attacking commoners, and who have the law on their side to boot!

Of course, it would be remiss to give the impression that the commoners were nothing more than fodder for bloodthirsty warriors. Tokugawa society was too orderly for that. Furthermore, not all *heimin* were perceived to be equally common. The samurai, having originally come from clans of farmers and in later times depending on farmers for their livelihood, recognized them as the most important of the commoners. Artisans and merchants followed, with the latter being held in considerable contempt since they were viewed as parasitic, producing nothing while making money from the labor of

others. The irony that this description also applied to the samurai was, apparently, lost on the buke.

Lowest of all in the social hierarchy were the *eta*, outcasts who were prevented from being accepted into society. In some cases, this condition was permanent and hereditary. In other cases, the status only endured while the person was engaged in certain professions, such as acting or being employed in a brothel district. The view of actors and other performers is especially interesting given the frequency with which samurai indulged in such entertainment, and was due in part to the belief that actors and such were a negative influence on the morality of the samurai class. At the very bottom of the *eta* class were those such as beggars and the handlers of corpses (including certain members of the police force!), the latter a result of religious strictures concerning contact with death and blood.

A few professions seemed not to fit very well into the social hierarchy. Priests, doctors, and courtiers, for instance, had no clearly defined class.

Samurai education and outlook

Perhaps the keenest insight into the nature of the samurai can be gained not from his position in society but from his title itself. "Samurai" is literally translatable to "one who serves." Indeed, the entire ethos of the feudal samurai was structured around a central tenet of unquestioning and unwavering loyalty to superiors. Individual initiative and thought were discouraged. The only honorable alternative to fulfilling an order, no matter how outrageous, was *seppuku*, or ritual suicide, which was considered an acceptable form of protest. While such a system makes ruthless sense for a *daimyo* (feudal lord), strict adherence to such requirements in a game setting is certain to alienate players, unwilling as they generally are to having even modest external controls placed upon their characters. Therefore, while obedience to superiors must be stressed for the purposes of authenticity and adherence to the AD&D Oriental setting and rules, wise DMs would be well advised to moderate the extreme example afforded by the historical model.

The stress upon unthinking obedience by no means should imply that the samurai was an ignorant automaton. While it is true that illiteracy among the lower samurai was often rampant, especially in pre-Tokugawa times, higher-status samurai received a fine education that, in addition to the traditional military subjects, included such offerings as Chinese classics, indigenous religion and literature, calligraphy, etiquette, classical music, mathematics (an esoteric and valued skill), medicine, astronomy, poetry, hunting, and the tea ceremony. (Etiquette is an

especially important nonweapon proficiency for a samurai character, since a failure of manners could result in death.) These subjects, along with martial skills, were generally taught in provincial centers of instruction.

Education means that your samurai character will require more role-playing depth than the "door-smasher" variety of fighter, but that doesn't mean you should play her as if she were Aristotle with a sword. A samurai's intellect was kept fairly well circumscribed. Despite the impressive selection of scholarly subjects available to the higher-ranking samurai, education during the feudal period emphasized the "repetition of orderly and expected patterns of thought and behavior, according to a precise sequence leaving little or no room for improvisation" (Ratti, page 99). Individual explorations of a personal or intellectual nature were discouraged, since the Tokugawa leadership understood that unrestricted thought was dangerous. This means that your samurai might be very thoroughly misinformed about a subject, yet it will probably never occur to her to question the validity of the information and seek out her own answers.

Creative DMs might wish to exploit this systemic aversion to uncontrolled knowledge to discourage overly inquisitive characters of any class, especially *wu jen* and other classes that deal with magic. In the Oriental world, independent and uncontrolled magical research would almost certainly be considered a grave threat to the established order. A character buying exotic herbs or materials from the local herbalist or apothecary is probably inviting unwanted official scrutiny.

Scholarly subjects aside, the military disciplines constituted the bulk of the samurai's education. Archery (*kyujutsu*), military horsemanship (*bajutsu* and *suibajutsu*), spear fighting (*yarijutsu* and *naginatajutsu*), swordsmanship (*kenjutsu* and *iaijutsu*), and swimming in armor (*suiei*) occupied the positions of highest importance.

Although the role of the samurai became increasingly administrative and less military in the years of relative peace that accompanied the rule of the Tokugawa shoguns, the samurai was nevertheless always expected to be an unsurpassed practitioner of *bujutsu*, which is a generally encompassing term for the martial disciplines. Standards did slip somewhat in times of peace, and the emphasis of training shifted from a comprehensive program designed to produce a fighter capable of meeting the broadest possible spectrum of threats to a much more focused regime in which practitioners specialized in and perfected only a very few disciplines that best suited their aptitudes and temperaments. If this narrowing of scope produced fighters of less breadth of skill, it was highly conducive to

forming extremely competent specialists similar to the *Oriental Adventures*' kensai class.

Such a high degree of specialization bred intense competition among the various martial arts schools (*ryu*), with violent expressions of doctrinal debate in the form of armed duels becoming so frequent that the Tokugawa were forced to ban the practice and isolate students of the various schools within their own compounds. This form of intense competition among schools and the longstanding feuds that usually resulted can be an excellent source of encounter material for a DM looking to introduce new nemeses or adventure hooks. NPC members of rival schools will inevitably attempt to embarrass player characters, beat them to valuable adventure objectives, spread rumors and lies intended to damage their honor, and otherwise do their best to scuttle the players' most carefully laid plans.

Samurai income and residences

"Okay, the job description sounds good, but what does it pay?" asks the typical AD&D game player. Samurai received incomes directly related to their station among the ranks of the buke. This income was not calculated in monetary terms, but in rice, which for much of Japan's history was the economic core of the society. Rice was measured in a unit called *koku*, which was roughly five bushels, the amount of rice sufficient to feed a single person for a year. This unit was so important that land was generally measured in koku capacity rather than area. High-ranking samurai retainers received control over actual rice-producing land, making these vassals into a landed gentry. Samurai of lower rank were allotted their stipends directly in rice, without land. Rice payments were usually wholly or partially converted to cash through rice handlers. As time wore on, the allotments received by the lower samurai (approximately 10-15 koku) often proved insufficient to offer a reasonable standard of living for a samurai and his family, leading to the dilution of the warrior class through intermarriage with the burgeoning merchant class. This practice had the dual benefit of providing the samurai with a better living standard and allowing the merchants the opportunity to "buy into" the military class and its associated social privileges. Poor samurai families that did not marry into money frequently turned to odd jobs or the production of handicrafts to meet their income needs, and this may be a good way for players to put some of those AD&D 2nd Edition non-weapon proficiencies to use.

The impoverishment of the lower samurai also created an atmosphere ripe for corruption. Corruption "became so wide-

spread and generally accepted, in fact, that it even acquired its own particular name: *tashi-buchi*, or 'eking out one's stipend'" (Ratti, page 111). Such corruption flourishing even in such a tightly regulated society can provide fertile ground for DMs looking to cause trouble for players. When petty samurai bureaucrats are open to bribes, almost anything can happen, usually with negative complications for the PCs. The blade cuts both ways, though, and imaginative players will certainly look to use tashi-buchi for skirting rules and regulations that would otherwise squelch the imaginative, nonconformist courses of action that keep DMs on their toes. The greased palm can often achieve much more than the drawn sword.

The type of residence a samurai was allowed to have was related to his income and, therefore, his status. Castle-building was severely controlled during the Tokugawa period in order to deprive potentially rebellious lords of strategic bases. This policy extended to razing many existing castles and should be taken into consideration when PCs get the urge to build large fortifications that might pose a threat to the existing order. As was to be expected, the policy on fortifications was not applied to the shogun and his most loyal retainers, so the player of a samurai character might find it in his best interest to attempt to curry favor with such personages if building a castle is a part of future plans.

The typical castle was composed of three concentric sections: a main center unit containing the main tower and residences of the warlords, surrounded by a second section containing the store-rooms, and a third section containing the living quarters of the castle garrison. (See "The Life and Death of a Castle" and "Sun Dragon Castle" in DRAGON® issue #121 for further details.)

In the days when the samurai had also been farmers, they naturally tended to live on their farms, visiting the castle of their daimyo only when summoned. When the classes separated, the samurai took up residence in the castle towns that grew up around the castles to provide the goods and services required by these large fortifications. This influx of samurai had the effect of increasing the size and importance of these castle towns (Dunn, page 17). This makes these towns prime settings for plots, political intrigue, and all manner of mischief. Colorful NPCs will abound, and it is here that shadowy government censors are likely to take an unhealthy interest in flamboyant adventurers.

The amount of land on which a samurai could build varied widely and was determined by his income and status. The plots ranged from two acres for a samurai earning in the 8,000 koku range to a more or less communal existence in "long

houses" for samurai of the lowest grades. These "long houses" were divided into apartments, and a typical arrangement was to have a gateway with a row of rooms as its upper story (Dunn, page 20).

Samurai at the daimyo level had at least two residences: one in their fiefdom and one in the capital, Edo (later called Tokyo). This was because the Tokugawa shoguns, being justifiably paranoid, required the daimyo to remain in residence in Edo on alternating years, where they could be watched and deprived of the time that they would require to put into action any rebellious musings. Furthermore, the daimyo were required to leave their families in Edo as a guarantee of good behavior when they returned to their fiefs. Women leaving Edo bore close scrutiny to ensure that they were not wives of daimyo being smuggled out of the city. In the more egalitarian world of 1990's role-playing, however, men and women are equally as likely to be of daimyo status, so no character is immune from scrutiny. Seeing the outraged expression on the face of a player whose arrogant samurai has just been mistaken for the spouse of a daimyo and rudely detained at a checkpoint is certain to make a DM's evening.

The daimyo hardly suffered while passing their obligatory time in Edo. They all maintained mansions in and around the city, built on land parceled out by the shogun. These mansions could be quite large, with the parcels of land ranging from 90,000 square feet for the lowest daimyo to 252,000 square feet for the highest. The mansions generally consisted of a long building enclosing a garden and the central house of the lord. The long building (*nagaya*) faced the street with fortified walls and windows, and contained the barracks of the daimyo's retainers and their armories. A retainer leaving the compound for any reason hung a wooden ticket inscribed with his name in the guard room so that it was always possible to keep track of which and how many retainers were out of the building at a given time. (Tip: If the campaign is beginning to get a bit stale and predictable, a splendid mystery can be built entirely around an evil NPC using a player character's ticket to frame him for murder, theft, or whatever else the DM can think up.) The nagaya surrounded an inner barracks that was home to additional troops and also contained storehouses and buildings assigned to higher-ranking clan officials. These officials included the councilors, the commercial agent, the financial officer, the building officer, the doctor, and the individual who represented the daimyo in his absence (Ratti, pages 69-71). Now you can design and build your very own feudal Japanese mansion in which PCs can run around and get into trouble. Be sure to include a lot of things to break—rare ceramics are

always a good choice.

The biennial journeys from the provinces to Edo and back can provide an abundant source of drama for the descriptive DM, as they were affairs of great spectacle and pomp, an opportunity for a daimyo to display his might with a great procession. An idea of the sheer size of such an entourage is given by an edict of Shogun Yoshimune (1716-1745), which specified that, for example, daimyo in the 200,000 koku range or more were to have 120-130 foot soldiers and 250-300 servants and porters. The daimyo himself would be carried in a palanquin and the leaders of the entourage would shout "Down! Down!" to the commoners along the way, the latter prostrating themselves with appropriate humility until the procession had passed (Dunn, pages 24 and 27).

The processions were actually required by the shogun, for they cost daimyo a large amount of money and thus left them fewer resources with which to become rebellious. A DM running an Oriental campaign will find this a handy tool for separating powerful samurai adventurers from their hard-earned cash.

The entourages had absolute right-of-way unless a procession of higher rank happened by in the opposite direction. Any "confusion" over who, exactly, had the right-of-way could result in an unfortunate incident involving weapons; in the world of *Oriental Adventures*, such "confusion" is almost certain to occur. It is interesting to note as an aside that the roads of feudal Japan were designed to make the use of wheeled conveyances difficult, so wagons and coaches were not to be found (although ox-drawn carriages were allowed in the Imperial court in Kyoto). This peculiarity resulted from the desire of the shoguns to limit the ability of potential rebels to transport large amounts of war material overland. Wagons were generally only used in certain festivals and when the need arose to haul very heavy loads, as in castle-building or hauling large quantities of rice within a city. DMs may wish to incorporate this into their campaigns to make life just that much more challenging for the players and their characters ("Okay, so now that we've fought our way to the 800-pound jade statue of Amaterasu, just how are we supposed to lug it back?").

Samurai entertainment

A samurai's life was not all fighting, training, or administering the Tokugawa bureaucracy. There were leisure pursuits as well. As a higher class of person, though, samurai were expected to refrain from the recreations of the commoners, such as theater-going or visiting brothels. This does not mean that samurai did not engage in such activity on a regular basis, only that they were obliged to exercise at least some discretion in the matter. This

discretion often amounted to little more than the wearing of a large, basketlike hat that hid the samurai's features during his town excursions.

More acceptable entertainments included the tea ceremony, flower arranging and viewing, *haiku* (poetry), brush-and-ink painting, hunting, rock-garden contemplation, calligraphy, and other such upper-class pursuits. Although frequenting theaters was discouraged, daimyo would often invite performers to their mansions to perform *noh* dramas or puppet shows, the latter being an extremely refined art.

On a philosophical level, the "proper" samurai recreations were intended for more than mere relaxation. The precision of the tea ceremony, the aesthetics of flower arranging, the introspection of rock-garden contemplation, and the expression of brush-and-ink painting, for example, all contributed to an overall balanced character and harmony of spirit, in accordance with Zen philosophy. Since these pursuits, when properly performed, are meditative in nature, the DM may wish to allow them to offer benefits similar to those granted to a shukenja during meditation.

DMs should not overlook the importance of these more peaceful activities in creating an authentic atmosphere. Such interludes, if used skillfully, can be employed to introduce plot elements against a distinct, Oriental backdrop. For instance, a samurai character's daimyo might summon him to a cherry-blossom viewing, in the process imparting information crucial to the current adventure. Naturally, in keeping with the occasion, this information would be enigmatic ("The man who fixes his gaze only upon his destination will surely stumble over that which lies at his feet," for instance). And imagine the discomfort of the average player of a samurai when his character is obliged to compose a haiku for his daimyo's latest poetry gathering!

The ronin

For players who find the duties and obligations of the affiliated samurai too confining, an excellent alternative is the masterless samurai, or *ronin*. Ronin literally means "wave man," and refers to the idea that, having been cut loose from the stability of a clan, the masterless samurai drifted through his adventurous life as if borne upon the ocean waves.

In many cases, this image was an accurate one. While many ronin existed prior to the ascension of the Tokugawa, that shogunate's consolidation of power and concomitant dissolution of numerous netlesome or hostile clans loosed a large number of clanless samurai upon the countryside. Many of these ronin sought acceptance into other clans, but many others roamed the land as itinerant

instructors, swords for hire, or simply brigands. Others joined various organized crime organizations or became "tame ronin," ronin who were content to instruct fairly well-to-do merchants or farmers in exchange for room and board.

For players, the freedom of a ronin character might seem appealing, but that freedom comes at a price. The entire history of Japan is dominated by the clan structure. As an individual essentially bereft of a clan, the ronin was at best a societal outcast, usually mistrusted by inferiors and despised by superiors and other samurai. Ronin characters should expect frequent challenges from affiliated samurai who find their very existence distasteful and insulting. Such characters will also find themselves under intense scrutiny by authorities, for ronin were a constant source of trouble to those in power. It should not be surprising that many dispossessed warriors bore considerable enmity toward the regime that caused their loss of affiliated status.

Such an environment of confrontation and suspicion naturally forced many ronin to become extremely competent and deadly fighters, with nothing to lose and everything to gain from challenging individual samurai, sensei, or even entire martial-arts ryu. Indeed, Miyamoto Musashi, perhaps the most celebrated and feared swordsman in the annals of Japanese history, was a ronin. In this context, it does not seem historically justifiable to penalize a ronin character by doubling the experience points necessary for him to rise in level. Such cruel experience-point rules sometimes serve only to discourage interesting gameplay. Constant scrutiny by authorities, frequent challenges from affiliated samurai, and social ostracism should adequately "penalize" the comparatively greater freedom that a ronin gains over his affiliated counterpart.

Samurai behavior

Some would-be samurai are probably thinking at this point, "This is all well and good, but none of it tells me how my character is supposed to act at a party."

One of the more difficult aspects of roleplaying a samurai is developing an understanding of how such a character should act and react to his environment in the course of adventuring. Much of the basic samurai behavior was predicated, of course, upon the demanding "warrior way" of bushido. The *Oriental Adventures* rules provide a fine distillation of the essential tenets of bushido, so it need not be reexamined here.

Bushido, as a "way" (*do*), was designed to cultivate and mold an appropriate samurai outlook, but there are examples of more specific dictums that a player can use as a guide to the conduct of his character. In 1615, the Tokugawa Shogunate promulgated the *Buke-sho hatto* ("Rules

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for Governing Samurai Houses"), which stated "13 basic rules which were to govern

the behavior of the samurai class for the whole of the Shogunate's existence" (Turnbull, page 120). These rules, as presented by Turnbull (page 120), are:

1. The study of literature and the martial arts must be practiced at all times.
2. Drunkenness and lewd behavior must be avoided.
3. Lawbreakers must not be hidden in any domain.
4. Daimyo must expel any samurai charged with treason or murder.
5. Residence in a fief is to be restricted to men born in that fief.
6. The shogun authorities must be informed of any intended repairs to castles. All new construction is forbidden.
7. Any plots or factions discovered in a neighboring fief must be immediately reported.
8. Marriages must not be privately contracted.
9. Visits by daimyo to the capital (Edo) are to be in accordance with regulations.
10. All costumes and decorations must be appropriate to the wearer's rank.
11. Commoners (that is, the nonsamurai classes) are not to ride in palanquins.
12. Samurai are to live a frugal and simple life.
13. Daimyo must choose men of ability to advise them.

In feudal Japan, there were rules and points of etiquette concerning almost any conceivable aspect of behavior. Of particular interest to players of samurai characters are a few of those dealing with the sword, the "soul of the samurai." For instance, touching a samurai's weapon without permission or bumping the scabbard was a serious breach of etiquette that could result in death to the offending party. Entering the house of a friend without leaving the sword outside insulted the friendship (this applied to the katana, not the wakizashi short sword, which rarely left the samurai's sash). If the guest had an attendant, the attendant took care of the sword for the duration of the visit. If the host allowed the guest to enter the residence with the sword, "it was placed on a sword rack on the right-hand side of the guests so that it could not be drawn and used. It was never placed on the left side unless there was an immediate danger of attack" (Turnbull, page 138). Also, exhibiting a naked blade was considered insulting unless it was in the context of showing off a prized possession, in which case the guest being handed the sword would withdraw the weapon from its scabbard slowly and with much apology.

Similar points of etiquette abound, but these few should be adequate to add a lit-



tle dash of authentic flavor to a campaign. While players should not be required to have a deep knowledge

of samurai etiquette, they should at least know enough not to be surprised if a life-and-death fight breaks out over something as seemingly innocuous as accidentally bumping someone's scabbard.

Conclusion

The AD&D Oriental rules provide the raw material for some truly unique, fascinating, and entertaining gaming. If this short background concerning the life and environment of the historical samurai helps hesitant DMs and players overcome their trepidation about adventures in a Japanese-style *Oriental Adventures* milieu, then it has served its purpose.

This is by no means an exhaustive account of life in feudal Japan. Whether you require more or less detail is wholly dependent on the nature of your particular campaign. This article provides just a few broad brushstrokes of color—the detail of the landscape is ultimately up to you. The most important thing is to have fun trying something new. Always keep in mind the words of the great swordsman Miyamoto Musashi: "In both weapons and other things, one should not be biased in favor of one thing over another. Too much is the same as too little. Do not imitate or mimic others; one must have a weapon appropriate to one's size and comfortable in one's hand" (Miyamoto, 22-23).

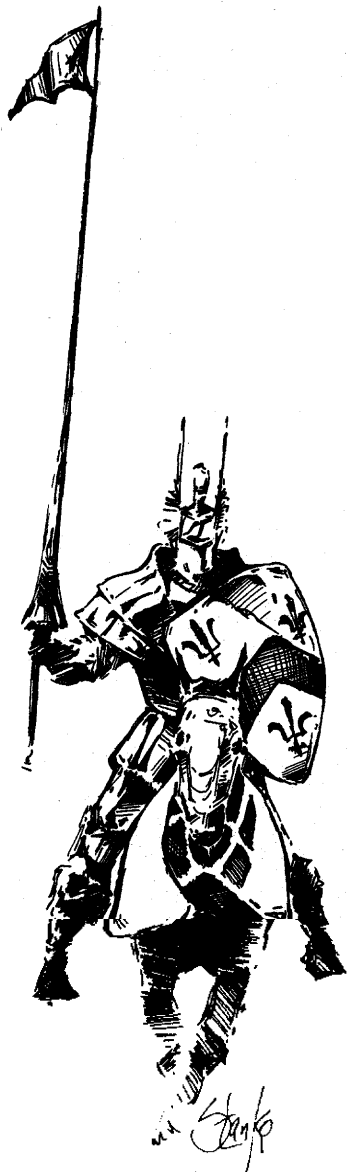
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To All a Good Knight

Knightly orders in AD&D® games

by Tom Griffith

Artwork by P. L. Wolf

Knights and chivalry play an important part in many AD&D® campaigns. Feudalism, jousting, tournaments, and other trappings of chivalry abound, as knights-errant wander the countryside seeking fame and glory, while loyal liege knights fight the enemies of their lords with bravery and vigor.

But there is a third type of knight rarely mentioned in the numerous articles about knighthood and chivalry. This third type belongs to a knightly order, which is generally made up of religious knights and paladins who choose to serve their church instead of themselves or a liege lord. This is the type of knighthood this article examines. We'll not only look at what makes the knight of a religious order different from other knights, but we'll find ways to help a Dungeon Master create his own knightly orders. This last part will be done by looking at the two most famous orders in history, as well as an order I created for my own Dragonhead campaign.

Knights in general

Knights in European history were typically categorized as either crown knights or knights of religious orders. Crown knights had a worldly sponsor, typically a landed lord or king who supported them financially. In return, the crown knights fought for their liege and performed other important military duties such as bodyguards, messengers, or whatever the liege needed done. Some examples of crown knights from fiction and role-playing games include Robert E. Howard's Poitainian Knights of the Hyborian World, the DRAGONLANCE® setting's Knights of Solamnia, the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting's Order of the Hart, King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table, and David Edding's Mimbrate Knights of his Belgariad series.

Religious orders, on the other hand, owe no special allegiance to a temporal authority but take their orders from the head of their church. Usually these religious knights support the church militarily by guarding temples, rescuing priests,

fighting the enemies of the church, and any other duties the church patriarch deems fit for them to perform. Several deities commonly support these religious orders. Some examples are the gods of good, evil, guardianship, and justice or revenge. Fictional examples include Dennis McCarty's Knights of Pallas from his Thlassa May series, the Knights of the Holy Shielding from the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting, and the Pandian Knights of David Edding's Mallorean books.

Despite the similarities between knightly orders and monkish brotherhoods, several differences separate the two, allowing them to serve different purposes in a fantasy campaign. Monks (here meaning martial artists) are restricted to some form of lawful alignment, while members of knightly orders can be of any alignment. Typically, monkish brotherhoods are unique to Oriental lands, while the majority of knightly orders are non-oriental. Also, humans are the only race that can become monks, while the usual



knight kit includes dwarves and elves in addition to humans. But the biggest difference between the two is their basic means of fulfilling their objectives. Monks generally attempt to achieve their goals by peaceful or nonviolent means such as diplomacy, subterfuge, or trickery. Martial force is usually a last resort. The various orders of knighthood, however, are first and foremost martial organizations that depend on the use of arms to get what they want.

Creating new orders

In order to create a useful and believable knightly order, several key questions need to be answered. The first question to be addressed is simply "Why does this order exist?" With a little thought, many reasons can be found for a band of religious knights to have been established. You can have an order whose goal is the complete destruction of all undead, and another whose mission is to protect a major shrine. Once this has been decided, jot down a few reasons for player-character knights in this order to become wandering adventurers (in the above examples, they might be sent out to destroy the undead in a certain area or to find magical items to defend the shrine).

As these knightly orders are religious in nature, the next problem that needs to be faced is the selection of the deity to be the patron of the order. Often, a glance at the list of deities in either the *Legends and Lore* book or the *Complete Priest's Handbook* gives some ideas on which deities would have knights, and what their knights should do. For instance, a god of culture would likely use knights in his battles to bring civilization to the uncivilized, expanding the home culture into new lands. Religious soldiers would have many uses, such as fighting opposing faiths, protecting important clerics, or serving as messengers and temple guards. The alignment of an order's knights would usually be determined by the deity they serve.

Most orders would have basic requirements or restrictions for potential members. Typically, most knights are warriors, either paladins or fighters with kits, particularly the cavalier and noble warrior kits. Some orders may be open only to paladins and clerics, while others have cavaliers only. In some rare instances, any character class might be knighted for some extraordinary services to a liege or church. A knight's race may also be a factor in his acceptance, so there might be wholly elven or human orders.

Once you know the new order's mission, deity, and membership requirements, some thought should be given to training and other day-to-day activities. Certain nonweapon proficiencies can be required or even given as bonuses at the DM's discretion. For example, a goddess of healing would certainly demand that

her knights know the healing nonweapon proficiency, while knights of a god of justice/revenge may have rudimentary training in law. Some proficiencies, or even the basic mission of the order itself, may require special equipment or weapons. These requirements should be factored into the new knight's training regimen.

Lesser details of the order's general operations and lifestyle of its members can do much to add flavor to the knight in the campaign. Historically, orders were headed by a grand master, usually the most experienced knight. Orders could then be subdivided into smaller groups, each headed by a separate knight or cleric. (Of course, fantasy campaigns need not be bound by these practices.) Another item to consider is the general lifestyle led by the member knights. Are they known as strict disciplinarians or gentle guides to their members? Does the order demand unquestioning obedience of its every command, or does it leave members to their own devices, contacting them only when necessary?

Like any operation, a knightly order needs to be financed. A certain arm of the order could be charged with obtaining the necessary money by looting monster-infested dungeons or hiring itself out as mercenaries or guards (or otherwise charging for its services). Still another example is running a front business with all profits going to the order, much like the banks of the Templars (see later example).

Next, give some thought to the history of the order—who founded it, where, and why. Did the deity appear to its founder and reveal a plan? Did a small group of knights-errant band together to accomplish a common goal, which continued on after their deaths? Did a group of country leaders with a common problem get together to found and finance an order to help them eliminate or control a problem? Many orders have a distinguishing symbol, motto, or separate coat of arms that emerged from this history. A certain item of clothing such as a tunic or helmet would thus identify a member, particularly during the heat of battle.

Finally, address the public opinion of the order. Does the general populace see these knights as an elite order of arrogant bullies, or members of a helpful sanctuary? Remember that public opinion often varies from place to place, social class to social class, or even individual to individual. An order's enemies are not going to say anything good about it, and they might have influential friends.

Historical orders

During the Crusades of the Middle Ages, two military orders of knights came into being, the Hospitalers and the Templars, which are detailed here. The organizations are good examples of knightly orders; not only are they well docu-

mented, but with minor changes they could make excellent orders for your fantasy campaign.

The Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem

In 1100, a group of Benedictine monks established a hospital in Jerusalem for the care of Christian pilgrims. The hospital was dedicated to St. John the Almsgiver. Soon the master of their hospital persuaded the Frankish conquerors of Jerusalem to make impressive donations to this enterprise. The hospital's staff of pilgrims was increased, and a number of crusading knights offered their services upon learning of the monks' work of mercy. By 1118, the hospitalers accumulated such wealth and power that they withdrew from the Benedictines and created their own order.

This new order, referred to as the Hospitalers, still contained brothers who continued the job of tending the sick and injured. But now it also had an army of knights who would fight against the Moslems to keep the routes to the Holy Land open and defend the Holy Sepulchre from infidel capture.

A special quality of the Knight Hospitalers was that they were made a sovereign order, which made them independent of any authority but the Pope. Despite their independence of temporal authority, kings, barons, and church leaders gave them valuable lands and treasure in recognition of their important duties. Even the poor gave what they could in gratitude for their service. Furthermore, young noblemen came in throngs to join the order and gave up their wealth to help finance the Hospitalers.

The Knight Hospitalers divided themselves into three classes; the Soldier Brother (or Knights of Justice), the Serving Brothers (foot soldiers), and the Chaplain/Clerks. They all fell under the jurisdiction of the Grand Master of the Hospital. The Hospitalers had their own symbol and style of dress. Their daily garb consisted of a black robe with an eight-pointed cross of white linen sewn on the shoulder or breast. In battle, the Knights of Justice wore a red surcoat, with the eight-pointed cross in white, over their armor.

The Knight Hospitalers were bound by the three religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Their lifestyle (especially in the beginning) was quite austere and simple. All knights were trained, fit warriors of military age; veterans past fighting age were sent home to manage the estates of the order in Europe. They were especially known for their discipline, even under fire. Along with the Templars, the Hospitalers were in the vanguard of every battle of the holy war. The Hospitalers typically held the

place of honor on the left in fighting formations. They also shared with the Templars the task of guarding the lonely frontier outposts of the Middle Eastern realm. Despite these shared duties, the Hospitalers and Templars were bitter rivals, even going so far as to argue one side of an issue merely because their rival supported the opposite side.

The Knights of St. John became a world-famous fighting force that amassed great wealth, power, and glory. Despite this, they continued to follow their original course of caring for the sick and giving food, shelter, and nursing to 1,000-2,000 infirm people every day in Jerusalem alone. For these reasons, the Hospitalers were loved and respected by all those who knew of their generous works and selfless dedication.

Later in their history, the Knights of the Hospital adopted naval forces to fight the infidel. Based first on Rhodes, then later at Malta, the knights continued in this role until conquered by Napoleon in 1800. They still exist as a sovereign and international order, but they have returned to their original task of caring for the sick.

An order based on the Knight Hospitalers is well suited for inclusion in a fantasy campaign. As followers of a goddess of healing, its job of fighting an infidel could be changed to acting as a rescue unit, venturing into dangerous places to find and aid lost or injured people. Naturally, each knight would be expected to know the healing nonweapon proficiency. Their alignment would be Lawful Good. Clerics and paladins would become the most common classes of the order, but it could also have cavaliers, noble warriors, rangers, and other warriors as members. The race of the knight would be unimportant to the order.

The Templars

In 1118, soon after the creation of the Hospitalers, a new order was established. It was modeled after the Hospitalers but conceived as a "perpetual sacred soldiery." The order took the rather grand title of the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon, but came to be known as the Templars.

The Templars originally established themselves as a police force whose purpose was to patrol the roads that connected the Christian outposts of Outremer, the major Frankish portion of the Middle East, and to protect the travelers who used it. In addition, they manned the high lookout towers that had been built in Outremer to enable the Christians to detect the coming of the Saracens. Later, this powerful group of knights turned its wealth and attentions to banking, building up an immense treasury by financing European customers and setting up a highly efficient department that specialized entirely in Moslem affairs.

These knights were supported as well by estates in Europe. If a castle there lay in such an exposed position that raiders always took the harvest, no lay lord could afford to live in it. Either the Templars or the Hospitalers would be glad to hold such estates, however, and share their profits.

The Templars, like the Hospitalers, were divided into three classes. The knights, often of noble birth, were first in the hierarchy and wore a red cross on a white tunic. Then came the sergeants, who in addition to being warriors also acted as grooms and bailiffs to the Templar knights. Sergeants wore the Templar red cross on a black tunic. Clerics made up the third degree of this order. Their duties included religious, medical, and other nonmilitary activities. All three divisions marched under the half-white, half-black Templar banner, which signified them to be "fair and favorable to the friends of Christ, black and terrible to His foes."

The daily operation of the Templars was similar to that of the Hospitalers. Like the Hospitalers, they reported only to the Pope. The leader of the Templars was called the Grand Master of the Temple; during much of the Crusades, he was the most experienced warrior there.

The glamor and fighting fame of the Templars spread rapidly throughout Europe, and it became the ambition of many a young lord to leave his impoverished state and enlist in an order whose power and wealth increased yearly. Once he joined, the young lord took the triple monastic vow of poverty, chastity, and especially obedience, even though they remained laymen of the church. The Templars took their obedience vow very seriously. They were expressly forbidden to yield strong places to buy their own freedom. In fact, the Turks, knowing the strength of the Templars' Oath of Obedience, wouldn't even try to ransom them, knowing well that they would just return later to fight. Prisoners who were either Templars or Hospitalers were killed outright. The Templars, being less cautious and more daring than their brother order, usually ended up losing more knights in battle than any other group of the Crusades.

Together with the Hospitalers, the Templars were known as "Christ's Militia," and they held the place of honor on the right side of the Crusading forces in battle. By 1150, the two orders combined supplied more than half of the knights in the army of Jerusalem. The spy system of the Templars also seems to have been the most efficient in Outremer; eventually, most of the Knights of the Temple spoke Arabic as well as their native tongue.

Despite their worthwhile duties, most laypeople saw the Templars as arrogant, ambitious, and independent. Many common folk accused the order of being more concerned with money than with human

life. But none questioned their courage or honor. It is said that Saladin once asked the Templars, whom he trusted, to safeguard the terms of the Acre treaty. The Templars declined, since they suspected that Richard intended to go back on his word. Still, these knights were not nearly as well-liked or respected as the Hospitalers.

As the Templars grew more famous and powerful, they began to be feared as well as admired. Since they were not subject to any king and made up a great army of disciplined fighting men, the rulers of the European nations began to fear them. Eventually, the king of France, Philip the Fair, seized the wealth of the Templars by accusing its brethren of heresy, black magic, and perversion. The Templars were almost certainly innocent of these charges, but the chief officers, subjected to hideous tortures, had confessions wrung out of them. Philip prevailed upon the French pope, whose election he had secured, to dissolve the order. The Grand Master, who had retracted his confession, was tortured for six years before being burned as a relapsed heretic. Thus the Templars, who had been steadfast soldiers of their belief for 200 years, became extinct.

An organization based on the Templars would also make an interesting addition to a fantasy campaign world. By serving a god of trade, these knights would be very useful in manning outposts, keeping trade roads open, and guarding against anyone or anything that sought to cut off these routes. Also, they could operate as bankers to finance trade missions and give loans. As they serve the god of trade, most members' alignment would tend toward Lawful Neutral.

Some of the warrior kits most likely to become quasi-Templars include the myrmidon and noble warrior. Rarely, thanks to their alignment, will paladins and rangers join such an order. Because of the order's arrogance and tendency for mounted combat along the roads it guards, these knights are usually human. In addition to any kit requirements, all such knights receive training in the language of the area to which they are assigned (note that this is a bonus proficiency).

The Order of the Peacekeepers

The Peacekeepers is an order of knights from my own AD&D Dragonhead campaign. They serve Lowinel, the goddess of peace, by mediating disputes between opposing churches or religious groups. The order originated in Crucistan as a means of stopping a violent religious war between the two largest churches of that nation. This war over doctrine threatened to destroy not only the smaller churches, but much of the country as well. Finally, many of the smaller churches of the country appealed to Lowinel for aid. She instructed each of the churches to assign

five of its finest knights to her and her will. Once she had this body of elite warriors, she taught them how to stop the war. They were successful in this and presided over the peace negotiations that followed. The lesser churches, pleased with the knights' success, decided to allow these knights the freedom to found their own order. The knights took as their symbol a dove bearing a shining sword in its feet, to remind others of their peaceful intent and the strength with which they could back it up. Thus, the Order of the Peacekeepers was born.

The Order of the Peacekeepers accepts only knights who are Lawful Good. Many of the members are paladins, although cavaliers, rangers, and warriors also fill the ranks. The race of the knight is not a factor. Regardless of their class, all knights receive training in etiquette, to avoid offending either of the disputing parties (treat as a bonus nonweapon proficiency).

The hierarchy of the order is as follows: At the top is the Grand Master of Peace, who is responsible for the knights and their missions; he answers only to the church. A council of church High Priests decides what those missions are, as well as sits in judgment over disputing parties. Each region has a Knight Master who controls the individual knights in their region to fulfill assigned missions, and a Head Priest,

who acts as an arbitrator who assures the church's orders are carried out.

The order is known for its humble lifestyle. The knights wear simple clothing of pale gray and eat only plain, wholesome food. The temples where they live are strong and unadorned, and all knights are required to attend divine services whenever such are held. Knights spend the majority of their funds on strongholds and the best arms and armor for the order's members. The order gets its financing from charging disputing parties for the order's expenses, with the adjudged loser paying the largest part. Knights are bound by vows of poverty but are allowed to marry and raise children. In the field, knights are allowed to exercise their own judgment in sudden disputes, as long as they follow church doctrine.

The Order of the Peacekeepers has a very good reputation with society at large. Public opinion of these knights is that they are faithful, humble, honest, and above reproach. Many times a knight on the road is welcomed into a private home for food and shelter.

Player-character knights should have a plausible reason for being a part of an adventuring party. If another PC is a member of a religion other than that accepted by the area, perhaps the knight

is traveling with him to not only protect him from harm, but to prevent him from creating too much of a furor with the established religion. Another reason could be that if the party is a powerful or famous one, a knight could be secretly assigned to watch them to ascertain if they are a threat to peace in the area.

Conclusion

The use of these knightly orders, as well as any new ones the DM and his players can create, will not only do much to improve the role-playing opportunities for PC knight characters, but will also lend flavor to an AD&D campaign and to campaign religions in particular. The next time one of your players wants to run a knight, cavalier, or paladin, go over these suggestions with the player and together create a new order that may add some excitement to an otherwise standard chivalric setting.

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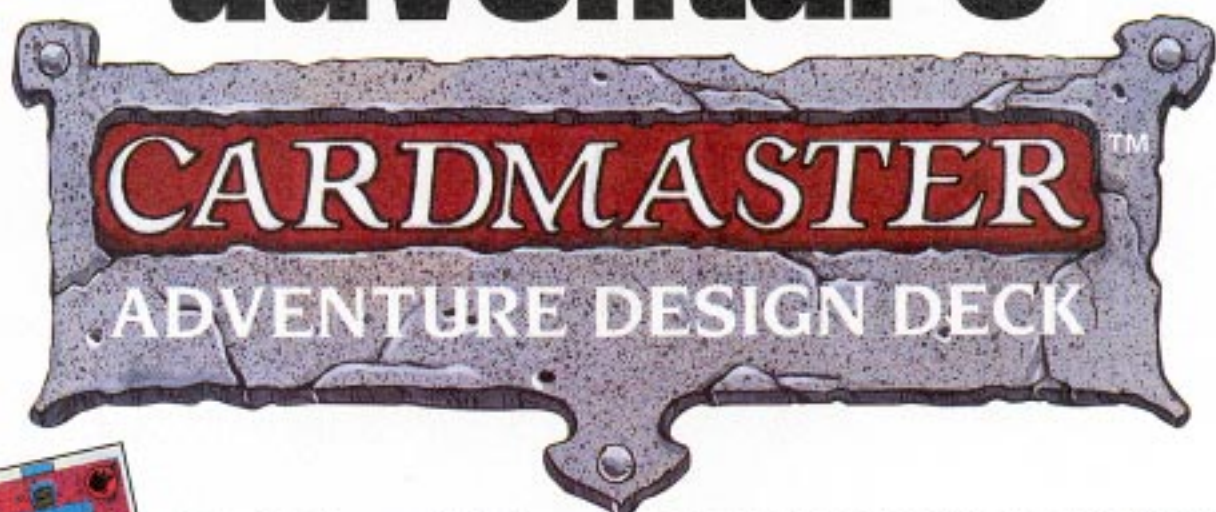
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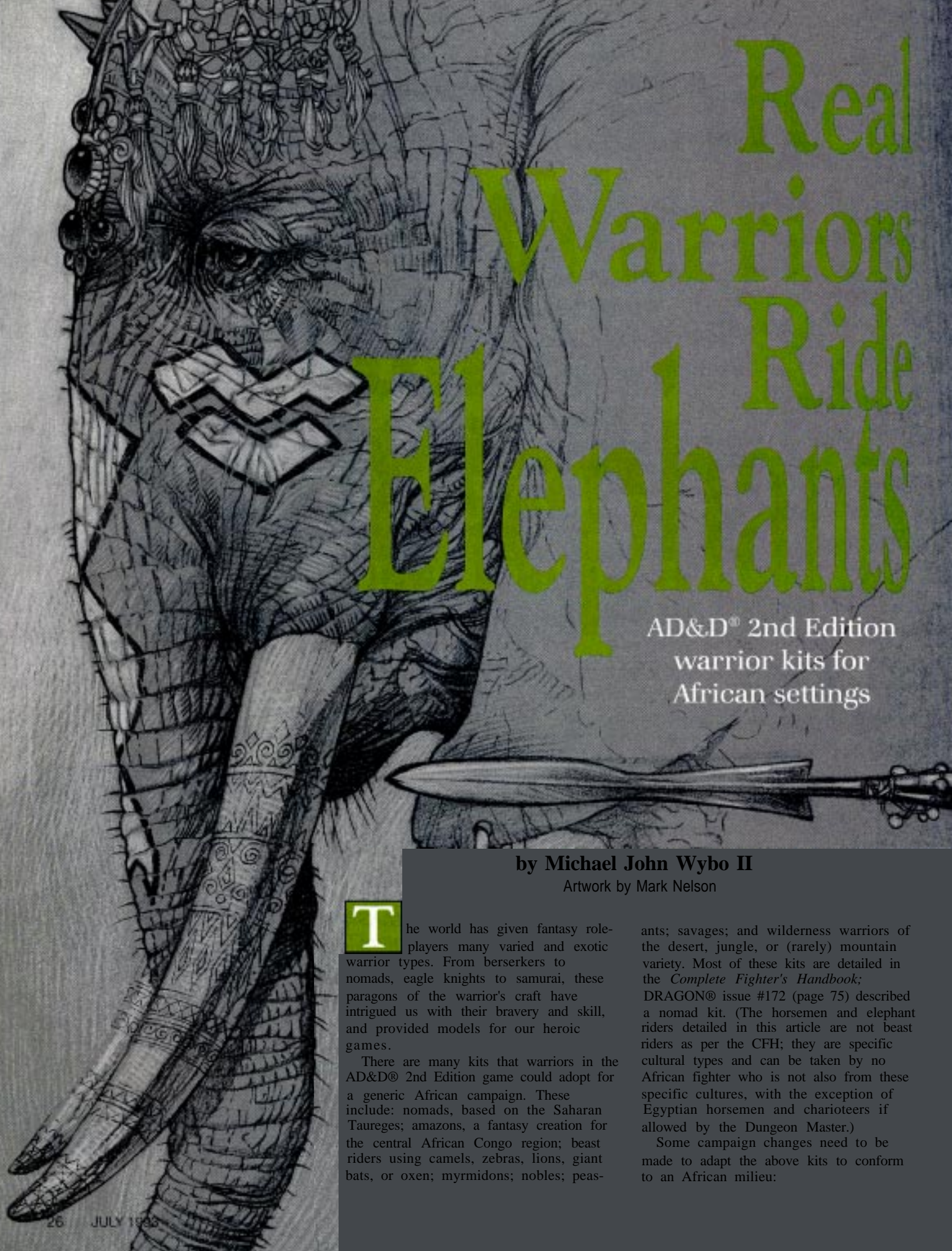
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Real Warriors Ride Elephants

AD&D® 2nd Edition
warrior kits for
African settings

by Michael John Wybo II

Artwork by Mark Nelson

The world has given fantasy role-players many varied and exotic warrior types. From berserkers to nomads, eagle knights to samurai, these paragons of the warrior's craft have intrigued us with their bravery and skill, and provided models for our heroic games.

There are many kits that warriors in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game could adopt for a generic African campaign. These include: nomads, based on the Saharan Taureges; amazons, a fantasy creation for the central African Congo region; beast riders using camels, zebras, lions, giant bats, or oxen; myrmidons; nobles; peas-

ants; savages; and wilderness warriors of the desert, jungle, or (rarely) mountain variety. Most of these kits are detailed in the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*; DRAGON® issue #172 (page 75) described a nomad kit. (The horsemen and elephant riders detailed in this article are not beast riders as per the CFH; they are specific cultural types and can be taken by no African fighter who is not also from these specific cultures, with the exception of Egyptian horsemen and charioteers if allowed by the Dungeon Master.)

Some campaign changes need to be made to adapt the above kits to conform to an African milieu:

- All weapons should be made of bronze or lesser materials. Recommended and required weapons should also be modified to reflect those which are native to Africa. Most warrior kits should not be allowed the use of armor; if they are, all armor should be made of bronze or lesser material. The stricture prohibiting armor and weapons of iron or steel should be relaxed only for those nations mentioned in this article as having iron for their warrior's weapons and armor.

- Mounts are exceedingly rare in Africa. No African warrior whose kit does not specifically state that he starts with a mount will probably ever own one (if allowed in a campaign, Egyptian charioteers could be considered beast riders). An exception can be made in the case of desert warriors and nomads with regard to their use of camels. Some instances of African nomad horsemen may be allowed, but this should be rare in the extreme and it is advised that such a thing be allowed only to high-level (and rich!) nomads.

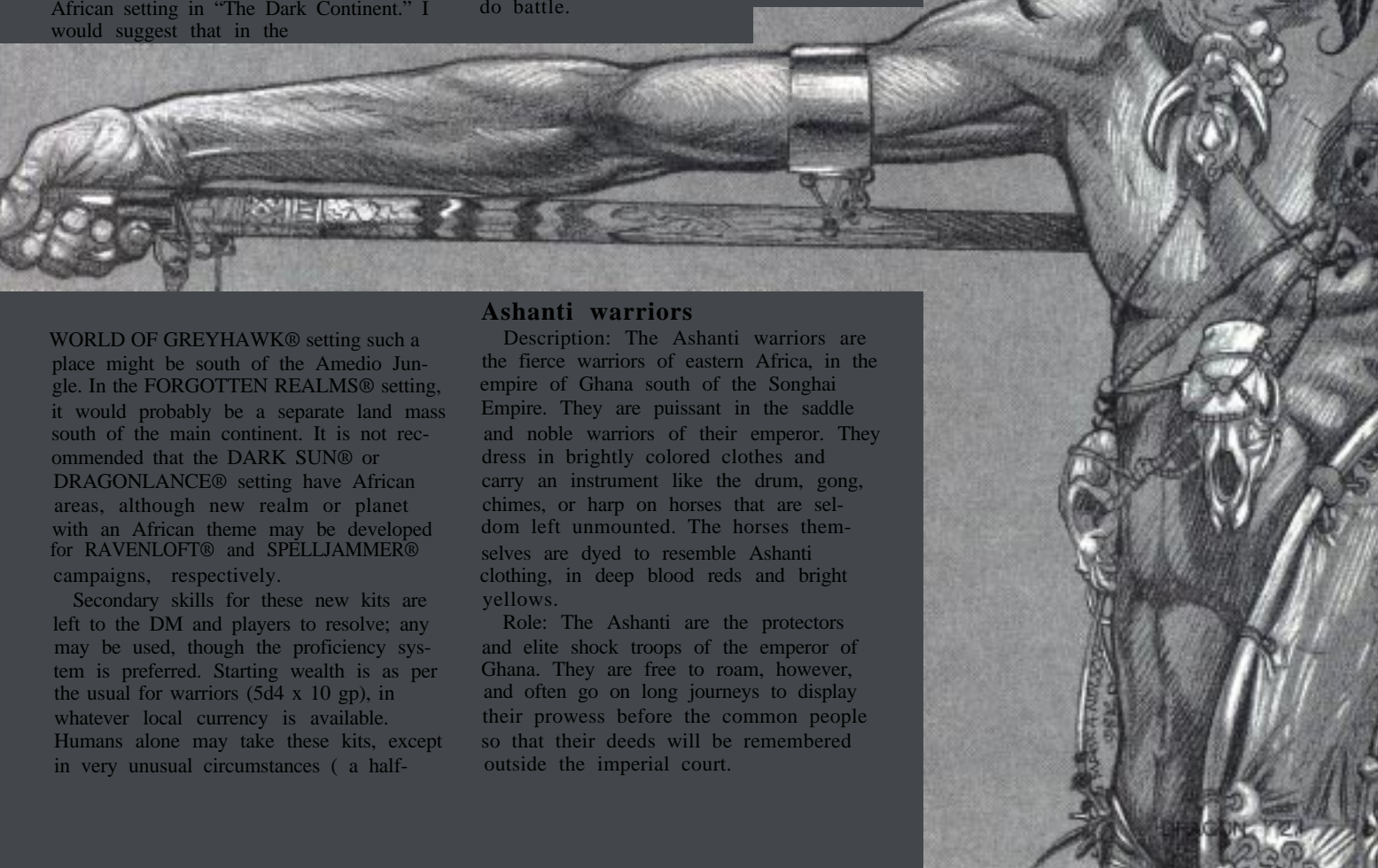
- In order to have a unique and specifically African campaign, a DM must describe those warrior types exclusive to the empires and tribes of Africa. The earlier-mentioned kits, although quite suitable to an African milieu, can be found in other continents and so give none of the feel of a purely African campaign.

- Finally, a pseudo-African setting must be developed for established campaigns. DRAGON issue #189 offered one possible African setting in "The Dark Continent." I would suggest that in the



elven elephant warrior, for instance, whose diplomat father took an elven wife). Use common sense.

I use the present tense in this article because although the majority of the warriors described here can no longer be found on Earth, it is hoped that somewhere in the many worlds of the imagination these proud warriors still hunt and do battle.



WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting such a place might be south of the Amedio Jungle. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, it would probably be a separate land mass south of the main continent. It is not recommended that the DARK SUN® or DRAGONLANCE® setting have African areas, although new realm or planet with an African theme may be developed for RAVENLOFT® and SPELLJAMMER® campaigns, respectively.

Secondary skills for these new kits are left to the DM and players to resolve; any may be used, though the proficiency system is preferred. Starting wealth is as per the usual for warriors (5d4 x 10 gp), in whatever local currency is available. Humans alone may take these kits, except in very unusual circumstances (a half-

Ashanti warriors

Description: The Ashanti warriors are the fierce warriors of eastern Africa, in the empire of Ghana south of the Songhai Empire. They are puissant in the saddle and noble warriors of their emperor. They dress in brightly colored clothes and carry an instrument like the drum, gong, chimes, or harp on horses that are seldom left unmounted. The horses themselves are dyed to resemble Ashanti clothing, in deep blood reds and bright yellows.

Role: The Ashanti are the protectors and elite shock troops of the emperor of Ghana. They are free to roam, however, and often go on long journeys to display their prowess before the common people so that their deeds will be remembered outside the imperial court.

The Ashanti are one of only two African warrior castes that have learned to use swift Arabian steeds in the art of war. Horses are rare in Africa and are seen as almost mythical beasts by some of the more superstitious tribes of the interior. This gives the Ashanti the advantage of surprise and mystery. It also gives them an advantage in that almost all of their enemies will be on foot while they tower above them with their striking colored horses.

Weapon proficiencies: Required: spear or lance; Recommended: saber, short composite bow.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Required: riding, animal handling, animal training, musical instrument; Recommended: singing, herbalism (for dyes), tumbling.

Special benefits: Whether an Ashanti is a ranger or not, he gains complete empathy with horses, being able to sense their basic drives, needs, and emotions with only a round of direct observation. This power is extended to make the horse almost a familiar to its master. The Ashanti and his horse both gain +1 hp/level of the Ashanti, and both gain an armor class two places better than normal while the horse is being ridden (this bonus is given only to the horse if the Ashanti is not a ranger).

An Ashanti automatically gains the land-based riding skill with horses only (horsemanship). This skill is at +1 and increases automatically by +1/3 levels hereafter. The Ashanti may try several maneuvers on horseback and receives no penalties to his rolls for these maneuvers. These include: vaulting into the saddle, horse jumping, guiding the mount with his knees, leaping from horseback to attack, hanging behind the steed, and firing missile weapons from horseback. He may increase the steed's speed by double the amount and for double the amount of time that a normal rider could (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, pages 62-63).

The Ashanti may alter the mood of onlookers while mounted by producing music, shouting, and performing intricate feats of equestrian prowess. This should be treated as an *emotion* spell, with the saving throw taken by onlookers at -1 for each five Ashanti so performing. This is not considered magic for purposes of magic resistance, and takes at least two rounds of riding and music playing, during which no other actions may be attempted.

Special hindrances: If the Ashanti's horse dies, the Ashanti loses double the amount of hit points that were gained by riding it. These cannot be regained for one year, during which time a new mount can be trained. If the Ashanti is a ranger, any new mount may be used in this manner and the time limit is waived, due to the great empathy that rangers have with animals; however, an Ashanti ranger is

not allowed empathy with any animal other than the horse.

An Ashanti may never wear armor or carry a shield. All powers are lost with the hit points, except for the riding bonuses, until a new mount is chosen or trained.

Benin hunters

Description: Benin hunters are the most honored warriors of the empire of Benin in the coastal areas of the present-day countries of Benin, Togo, and part of Nigeria. Benin lies between the Songhai, Nigerian, and Ghanan empires to the north, east, and west, respectively. The empire holds sway over many tribes, including the Dahomey, Ewe, Ga, and Yoruba. Their origins can be traced back to the time when the hunters were responsible for the feeding and protection of the tribes of Benin. With the dawning of empire, the hunters of Benin were no longer needed for the collection of food for their people, so they assumed the role of protectors and bounty hunters. They track down fearsome beasts that prey on the outlying villages of the empire and criminals against their people. Unlike bounty hunters, however, the hunters never ask for rewards for these tasks. They crave more the gratitude of the people and the fame that many successful kills bring.

Role: Benin hunters are often on missions, providing food for those villages whose men have been killed by war, disease, or some other evil, or hunting down some enemy of the empire. When war breaks out, they are recalled to the capital to be knitted together into an impressive warrior force. These are the elite guerrilla warriors of the empire who, through their constant struggles, are much more experienced than the standard warriors of Benin.

Weapon proficiencies: Required: blowgun or bow; Recommended: spear, knife, darts, net.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Required: hunting, tracking, set snares; Recommended: animal lore, herbalism, bowyer/fletcher, animal noise, survival—tropical.

Special benefits: All Benin hunters are rangers. They gain +5% to both hide in shadows and move silently rolls. They choose one broad group of creatures to concentrate upon and one specific creature within that group to specialize in opposing. The groups could include: giants, undead, lycanthropes, etc., and the specific individuals could then be: voadkyn, ghosts, wereboars, etc. The DM must sit down and decide with the character what groups and monsters are appropriate to an African campaign. The hunter gains a +4 bonus to attack any creature within that broad group and +1 hp damage, with another +1 hp damage bonus per three levels gained thereafter against

the specific creature in that group.

Within the empire of Benin, these hunters are much revered. The local people will almost always be friendly and helpful to the hunter. If an unusual request is given by a hunter (asking for something other than food and lodging, for instance), a +1 bonus is added to non-player character reaction rolls in the hunter's efforts to persuade the subject to comply with the request. Greedy or impossible requests are always denied, and the hunter may lose all cultural benefits if this behavior is kept up.

Special hindrances: Benin hunters wear no armor but may carry shields. The hunters do not receive the two-weapon combat ability of most rangers. The hunter also must be responsive to the call of his emperor to war; the cultural benefits of being a hunter may be lost if this call is ignored without good reason.

Bornu horsemen

Description: The only other warrior caste besides the Ashanti to use Arabian steeds in war are the horsemen of the empire of Kanem-Bornu, in north-central Africa. The horsemen are one of the few warrior castes to use armor and are the nobility of that empire.

These noble horsemen have a code of honor that is very similar to that of chivalry and bushido. A horseman will never break this code for fear of bringing on the wrath of the gods and the scorn of the people.

Role: Like the Ashanti, these horsemen are possessed of powerful, quick, and large beasts. The horses of these warriors are reserved for the elite in the Kanem-Bornu empire, however, and so the horsemen have a much different outlook from the Ashanti's. They are holy and noble knights in a manner stunningly reminiscent of paladins and cavaliers. What they lose in protection they gain in the cultural exclusivity of their procession of horses and armor. They are to the normal warriors of Africa what a knight in full plate armor is to plate-mailed footmen of the west.

Weapon proficiencies: Required: lance, spear; Recommended: saber.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Required: riding; Recommended: war trumpet, animal handling, animal training.

Special benefits: Not only do the horsemen of Bornu wear chain mail of iron, a very rare commodity in Africa, even their horses wear protective mail. On horseback, the horsemen use spears as if those weapons were light lances with a speed factor of four, gaining double damage when charging. They use lances as if they were one class better in damage and they use heavy lances as if they were two-handed swords for the purposes of damage only. Although the Bornu horsemen, like the Ashanti, ride light Arabian war

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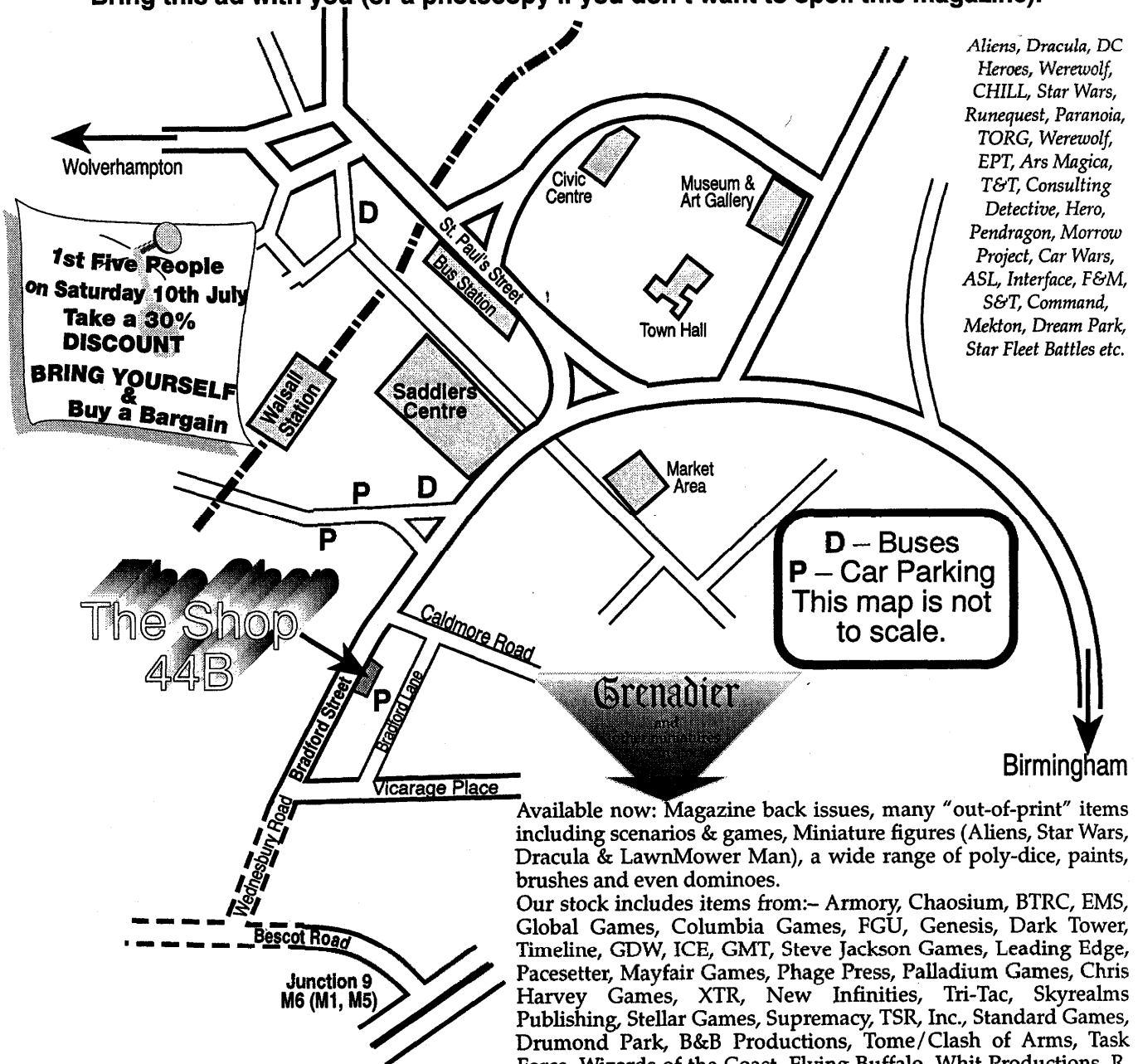
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horses, any weight of lance may be used to full effect from their backs by the Bornu. The horsemen may ask for food and lodging from any noble of the empire of Bornu and be granted it. They have a +1 reaction roll bonus when dealing with subjects of the empire of Kanem-Bornu.

Special hindrances: Bornu horsemen never use shields. They may use no missile weapons but the spear, and may carry only one of these. Bornu horsemen are bound by a code of chivalry identical to that of the cavaliers of the west. If they break this code, they must atone in a manner suitable to the emperor or they lose all cultural benefits; in the latter event, other Bornu horsemen will come to take back the horseman's horse, armor, and barding. The horsemen must heed the emperor's requests and calls to war, with penalties for disobedience as mentioned above.

Kalahari bushmen

Description: Bushmen live in the scrubs and wilderness of the Kalahari desert. They are diminutive men who are as hard and coarse as the desert where they live.

Role: The bushmen are warriors of the desert who are not like the romantic desert peoples of the AL-QADIM™ setting. These are grizzled barbarians who have had to be strong to survive.

Weapon proficiencies: Required: spear, knife; Recommended: dagger.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Required: survival—desert; Recommended: fire starting, direction sense, weather sense, alertness, endurance.

Special benefits: The major benefit of being born in the harsh conditions of the desert is that it breeds toughness and strength. This translates to an initial bonus of +1 (or +10%, if an 18 is rolled) to initial Strength and +1 to initial Constitution. Bushmen can smell moisture in the air at up to a mile's distance, a remarkable testament to the dryness of the desert air and to the acute senses of the bushmen. The bushmen may also hide in the desert wastes and move silently as if they were rangers of equal level hiding in shadows and moving silently. They thus surprise foes as if they were elves. If the bushman is a ranger, he may add 10% bonuses to both skills if used in the desert.

Special hindrances: Bushmen may never wear armor but may carry shields. They are usually wrinkled and coarse-skinned from the wind and sun, and so suffer a -2 penalty to initial Charisma to those not of the bushmen culture.

Kongo pygmy

Description: The Kongo pygmies are diminutive natives of the jungles of the Congo in central Africa. They often paint their bodies in green and yellow paints to blend into the jungle and are extremely

secretive, as well as highly protective of their territory.

Role: Kongo pygmies are the ultimate jungle guerrilla warriors. What they lack in strength and size they make up for in stealth and preparation. They always avoid direct, frontal attacks, weakening enemies through attrition and attacks against weak or isolated individuals. They almost never show themselves in battle, fading like ghosts into the jungle. They also rely on rumors spread about them that breed morale-destroying fear in their enemies.

Weapon proficiencies: Required: blowgun or bow; Recommended: dagger, knife, net.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Required: survival—jungle, herbalism, Recommended: animal lore, set snares, hunting, tracking, alertness, direction sense, bowyer/fletcher.

Special benefits: Kongo pygmies are very agile and so have a +1 to their initial scores for Dexterity. They move silently and hide in shadows like rangers two levels higher than they (or like rangers three levels higher if in the jungle). This does not include bonuses associated with camouflage paint that is used to further blend into the jungle (+10% to hiding in woodlands of any sort). They surprise foes with the same chances that elves have. They may brew poisons for their blowguns and arrows, in a manner similar to that used by Athasian bards from the DARK SUN campaign. If this supplement is not available, allow pygmies to know how to make one type of insinuating poison, rolled randomly from the list in the DMG, per level.

Special hindrances: Kongo pygmies are not very large and thus suffer a -1 to their initial Strength score (or -10% if exceptional Strength is rolled, with negative-number results meaning that Strength is reduced to 17).

Kushite elephant warriors

Description: Elephant warriors are the fearsome masters of war elephants in the East African kingdom of Kush. They are Kush's main fighting force, which is second in strength only to the Egyptians and their war chariots (Egypt is on the kingdom's northern border).

Role: The elephant warriors are fearsome in war and, when mounted, severely outclass most warriors. These warriors have developed very little in the ways of other martial talents because of their reliance on their awesome steeds. They tend to be confident, arrogant, boastful, proud, and determined. They also revere and respect elephants as intelligent companions as well as mounts.

Weapon proficiencies: Required: bow, spear, or sling; Recommended: dagger, short sword, knife.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Required: land-based riding (elephant only); Recom-

mended: animal handling (elephant), animal training (elephant).

Special benefits: The only benefit an elephant warrior receives is an obvious one. He starts play with a loyal, trained, adult war elephant as a mount.

Special hindrances: Elephants are their own hindrances (a proverb from Nepal says, "If you want to take revenge on your enemy, give him an elephant"). They must be watered regularly—twice a day for at least two gallons each time—and bathed at least once a week, twice a week in arid, desertlike conditions (it takes at least 15 gallons of water to wet down an elephant). They eat up to 300 lbs. of hay or grass daily; the majority of the elephants' days are spent grazing if hay is not provided. Also, elephants have great trouble traveling through heavy jungles (one-quarter speed, and attack at -4 to hit). They will not usually venture into the desert, as they need watering too regularly for any extended journey there.

Elephant warriors are also the employees of the king of Kush, and as such may have to perform duties and missions for him even if his kingdom is not at war. Further details on elephants and their use in AD&D campaigns may be found in DRAGON issue #177, "Think Big." Note that elephants are reasonably intelligent and could be extraordinarily helpful as well as dangerous fighters.

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The Game Wizards

#1

The DRAGON STRIKE™ game:
the making of a man-scorpion, and more

by James M. Ward



For those of you who haven't purchased the DRAGON STRIKE™ game yet, let me touch on one of the most interesting features of this TSR fantasy game. This is a fun, fast-playing board game with role-playing elements. I believe that all regular DRAGON® Magazine readers will find this game well worth picking up in their local toy or hobby stores. Although the game boards, miniature figures, and 16 scenarios are highly enjoyable, the real worth of this product lies in the 33-minute-long hyperReality™ fantasy video that comes in every box.

"What in the world is hyperReality?" you very reasonably ask. That question is best answered by starting at the game's beginning.

Sometime last year, the people here revived a very old idea, a concept that had been kicked around TSR for years.

"Wouldn't it be cool to hook up a video with a role-playing game?" was the question. The answer was always, "Yes, it would be cool, but it would cost a lot of bucks, and who would we get to do it?" Then, last year, things changed. TSR had grown enough to afford the time and effort of developing a video, and we had access to experienced people we could trust to get the work done.

The people doing the technical work for us were Flint Dille, Peter Silver, and David Hamby. Flint, who lives near Hollywood, has a list of animation credits longer than my arm. He put together the first script and directed the actual filming of the project. Peter has a list of interesting film credits a mile long and was in charge of bringing together all of the actors, film crew, and props that would go into the making of the video. Then there was David, who works for a company that got its start by colorizing old black-and-white movies. His computer skills and his company put the wonderful special effects touches into the video.

Right about this time, you might ask where a boy like me from the rural farmlands of Wisconsin fits into this picture. I was the technical fantasy expert. Even though the game wasn't firmly based on the D&D® or AD&D® fantasy rules, I was the one who was supposed to make sure that the wizards didn't use swords and the warriors didn't cast magical spells. It made me nervous from the beginning.

So, how does one start making a fantasy action video? One must start with a script. It was Mr. Dille's job to put together an interesting fantasy treatment. Work on this started in June 1992, but things really got going during the 1992 GEN CON® game fair. While most people were having great fun role-playing, board gaming, and buying things at the convention booths, Flint, myself, and a few others were locked up in a hotel suite, wrestling with the questions that needed to be answered to finish the script.

Everyone realized we were up against horrible deadlines. TSR wanted to display the video at the Toy Fair show in New York in March 1993. Because of this deadline, poor Flint had to rush together a script in less than a month. All good old Jim had to do was to say yes or no to questions about armor or magical items, but poor Peter had to put together a film crew and studio location, and poor David had to teach all of us the things we needed to know to match computer scenes and backgrounds with live actors doing their thing on a sound stage. This last was the key to the entire affair. There would be no filming in far-off Irish castles for us, no hundred-mile pans back from huge canyons or far-away forests. All of the action would happen in a film studio with the walls painted white. When we needed a vista, it would be supplied with the help of computers. Whether we needed a stroll through a marshy swamp or a walk through a wall, the computer would help us put together the effect. It was a fascinating process in which I was proud to have a small part.

It was planned that I would come out to the shooting in Hollywood on the day before everyone started rehearsals. Then Peter gave me a call and asked what I really wanted to do in the actual production process. I said that I thought I could best make an impact on the costuming. Peter calmly said, "Well, then you have to come in much earlier." I should have realized then what I was getting myself into. I found myself on a plane flying out four days before I was expected.

Costumes are picked out long before the actors start acting. Hollywood is a big and interesting city, and I discovered that it is filled with lots of places that rent medieval dresses, armor, and materials, all of which we needed to put together our fantasy epic. You would be amazed at the things we had to look through to assemble the outfits for the video. The actors and actresses helped as well, because they wanted to look as good as possible. But it was the mighty efforts of two lovely costumers who allowed us to have the dynamic appearance we did on this video. I can't say enough about the hard work they did in last-minute sewing and stitching to make everyone look good in front of the camera.

Then there was the makeup. Peter found some unbelievably talented people to put the necessary makeup on everyone. I took TSR's art books and AD&D collector cards, and from these we got some great effects. One of the collector cards had a strange green band on the eyes of a wood elf. We used this pattern on our elf, and it looked great. Another collector card had a coyote pelt on a magic-user; an actor found a coyote pelt, and with the help of our costumers we had a headdress for our wizard.

But the real makeup work came in cre-

ating our man-scorpion. During one scene, a terrible monster was to try to kill all our heroes. There was a lot of debate over what that creature would be. It was finally decided that a half-man, half-scorpion would be great. David and his computer crew said they could join the two images together. The makeup people were able, after four hours of work and lots of airbrushing, to turn an actor into a fierce man-scorpion. In front of the camera, the actor roared and twisted his face as would the grim monster; it looked spectacular. Then the computer people took the film of his body from the stomach up and joined it to the body of a scorpion, creating one of the most impressive scenes of the movie. The makeup crew also applied great fake tattoos to the magic-user. These became the basis for a interesting special effect produced by the computer people, who made the markings on the mage's face appear to move with a magical will of their own that was fantastic to watch in the close-up scenes.

Then there were the stunts. Now, you wouldn't think from looking at me that I would have much to do with the stunts, and you're correct. But I was involved with putting some of them together. We had some interesting questions to answer on several different occasions. Our cleric was an actor who was great with a special glaive weapon he'd used during some Conan movie work. He didn't like the fact that TSR-game clerics don't use edged weapons, but it turned out his quarterstaff work looked sharp on camera.

There was also a scene where the thief had to climb a high wall and attack a bugbear guard. We agonized over how this would be done: Should the thief leap over the wall and backstab the monster, or should there be a special fight high on a parapet? Finally, we all decided that she would climb up the wall, attract the attention of the monster, and use her whip to pull the bugbear off the wall. In the movie it looks great, and there is some very funny dialogue in this scene. From the perspective of the camera, however, it looked a lot different. The actress (thief) hung from the side of a plain white wall by clutching white two-by-fours. There was a scaffold behind the wall, and the bugbear actor in costume walked back and forth above the thief. In the scene as it was filmed, the bugbear heard the thief's lines and bent over the wall's edge. The thief then gently lashed her whip upward and struck the other actor. The camera was stopped, and the whip was then wrapped around the actor's bugbear head while the actress-thief got off the wall. Then the "bugbear" did a 30' fall onto a huge foam cushion. On the video, the computer people turned the white wall into a castle tower, and the magic of film editing changed the slow lash of the

Continued on page 38



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SAGE advice

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writer's guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage takes a brief look back at the original AD&D® game, turns his eye to DRAGON Magazine itself, and considers the problem of incurable wounds and other magical complexities.

When using the shadow walk spell from *Unearthed Arcana*, how does the user sense his surroundings on the Prime Material plane? Does he sense them at all? Can the caster pass through solid objects such as stone? Can he travel underwater? Can the caster move in three dimensions? For example, can he descend into the ocean? Does the water even exist as far as the spell-caster is concerned?

Since the spell's primary use is for rapid travel on the Prime Material plane (in fact, the caster never actually leaves the Prime Material plane), I suggest that you allow the user to see the portion of the Prime Material that immediately surrounds him. What the character sees is a monochromatic mass of shadows, just like what is visible at twilight (see table 62 from the revised PH, page 117). Since the caster is traveling at 126 miles an hour (seven leagues a turn), he probably isn't going to seem too many details while moving—objects would fly by in one gray blur.

The spell does not grant the power of flight, but it does negate most terrain penalties. The caster can dash along the bottom of the ocean, through swamps, and over mountains. In any case, the caster traces a path along the ground. When traveling across a gorge, for example, the caster moves down one canyon wall, across the bottom, and up the other

wall. The caster can pass through cracks as though using a *wraithform* spell, but cannot pass through solid objects. Note that the caster must be in a mass of deep shadows to begin the spell, and I suggest that the caster always must end in shadows as well.

Since this type of travel tends to be disorienting, the DM might wish to use the getting hopelessly lost rule (see DMG, page 128) applying modifiers for terrain and overcast conditions unless the caster is following a road or knows exactly where she is going.

The command dragon spell from DRAGON issue #182 seems useless. The spell component, all the shards of the egg from which the dragon hatched, is almost impossible to get and is used up in the casting. Why would anybody put this spell into a book?

I don't see any flaw in your assessment of this particular spell's limitations. Player characters probably wouldn't have much use for this spell on a day-to-day basis; this is what we call a "campaign spell" in Lake Geneva, not a wizard's bread and butter, but handy for defining the game mechanics for bits and pieces of a campaign's storyline. (Just how did Ailuj save that village from a great wyrm when she was only 16? Or why is that gold dragon doing just about everything that lich tells him to and how do we stop it?). There is no save vs. this spell, so the reference to a save in the spell description (issue #182, page 12) probably is supposed to refer to the dragon's magic resistance, if it is old enough to have any.

Does a character wearing a periapt of wound closure suffer special damage from a sword of wounding, vorpal blade or sword of sharpness?

Generally speaking, when the irresistible force (*sword of wounding* prevents magical healing short of a wish) meets the immovable object (*periapt of wound closure* prevents all open, bleeding wounds) you should rule in favor of the defensive power.

In the case of a *sword of wounding*, the periapt prevents the wearer from taking the extra points of bleeding damage each round—the wound closes. In addition, the periapt wearer heals naturally at double the normal rate even if struck by a *sword of wounding*. The DM is free to rule that the periapt also allows magical healing of damage from a *sword of wounding*. I know many DMs who consider a *periapt of wound closure* to be equal to or better than a *wish* when it comes to healing wounds. If you follow the item's description to the letter, however, you'll come to a different conclusion. While the periapt allows the healing of wounds that wouldn't do so otherwise, *sword of wounding* damage heals naturally at the normal rate. The periapt's "heal anything" power always applies to such things as damage inflicted by mummies, which normally do not heal unless a *cure disease* spell is applied first. In this case, the periapt wearer recovers hit points at the normal rate. He still is infected with mummy rot, however, and will die eventually if the disease is not cured. The item's description makes no specific mention of allowing magical healing that otherwise would not be possible, only normal healing that wouldn't otherwise be possible.

A *periapt of wound closure* does not prevent damage nor does it provide instantaneous healing. So I can't think of any reason why the wearer couldn't have her appendages severed by a *sword of sharpness* or otherwise forcibly removed—though the periapt would prevent any additional damage from bleeding that the DM might otherwise assign for the loss of an appendage.

How long does a familiar summoned by a find familiar spell live? If a familiar dies of old age does the wizard still have to make a system shock check and lose one point of Constitution? What happens to a familiar if its wizard dies? Can a familiar's hit points ever be increased?

The spell description (see PH, page 134) says the spell grants the familiar an exceptionally long life. It is up to the DM to define this, but I suggest that the familiar should have a basic longevity equal to the standard lifespan for the spell-caster's race (see PH, table 11, page 24). For example, a human caster's familiar would live 90 +2d20 years. To calculate the familiar's starting age, use the figures on table 11, but treat any maximum dice results as minimums. For example, a human's familiar would have a starting age of 16-18 years—base 15 + 1d4 years, treating a rolled "4" as a "1". Given this approach, a familiar should not be in danger of dying of old age before the caster does unless it is exposed to magical aging or unless the caster receives a magical boost to his own lifespan. In either of these cases, the

caster is obliged to care for his familiar, and the DM should inflict the full penalty if the caster allows the familiar to die. Note that *wishes*, potions of *longevity*, and other magics that can extend a character's lifespan also work on familiars.

The spell description says a familiar loses one hit point a day if separated from the caster. One could argue that death certainly is a separation. If the caster is raised or resurrected before the familiar dies, the familiar is saved. On the other hand, the DM might rule that the familiar can avoid hit-point loss simply by remaining within one mile of the caster's body. In any case, the bond between the caster and the familiar should be dissolved at some point if the caster dies and is not raised or resurrected. The dissolution of the bond ends the familiar's dependence on the caster and frees the familiar from the caster's control. The DM is free to decide how long it takes for the bond to dissolve; it might dissolve instantly on the caster's death, which would force the wizard to summon a new familiar any time he dies and is brought back, and it probably should be no longer that a number of days equal to the familiar's hit points.

The spell description says a familiar has 2-4 hit points plus one hit point per caster level. I suggest you take this literally and give the familiar an extra hit point whenever the caster gains a new level.

What happens when you put a bag of holding and a portable hole together? A friend told me you get something like a nuclear explosion. Also, after reading DRAGON issue #192, I began to won-

der what would happen if you put a bag of holding or portable hole into a bag of devouring?

See the portable hole description in the DMG, page 177 for the consequences of putting one of these items inside another. There are no explosions, but characters might wish there was one instead.

It is up to the DM to decide what happens when an extra-dimensional space is placed inside a *bag of devouring*. I can think of two possible outcomes: One, the *bag of devouring* works normally—it swallows the bag or hole just as it swallows any other bit of animal or vegetable matter. Since a *portable hole* is made of some pretty peculiar stuff, it's possible that the monster won't decide the hole is food and won't swallow the hole immediately (see DMG, page 159. This might make it possible to remove the *portable hole* before it's too late. (In campaigns where this happens, foolhardy PCs just might decide this is a good way to test magical bags to see if they are *bags of devouring*; however, this is not a very smart thing to do when you consider the possible danger.) Two, the *bag of devouring* acts like any other extra-dimensional space. In the case of a the *portable hole*, a gate opens to another plane and everything within a 10' radius is sucked in. Sadistic DMs will decide that the other plane is the monster's gullet, but this doesn't have to be the case. Technically, both items should be destroyed when the gate opens, severing the connection between the bag and the monster. The rules are unclear about what happens when you try to place one *bag of holding* inside another, so I recommend

that the *bag of devouring* either quietly swallow the *bag of holding* or that the *bag of devouring* simply ruptures and dumps its contents into nilspace just as a *bag of holding* does if overloaded (see the DMG, page 160).

Page 78 of the Complete Priest's Handbook says priests of the god of peace have to be Lawful Good. What does order and bureaucracy have over freedom and diversity?

A lawful alignment generally does imply a desire for order, but not necessarily a liking for bureaucracy. War by its very nature is disruptive and chaotic, so its natural antithesis is law. Furthermore, finding peaceful solutions to conflicts, and identifying conflicts that cannot be solved peacefully, requires patience, dedication, and self discipline. Consider the great degree of self sacrifice that most United Nations peacekeeping efforts require—peacekeepers have to set a non-violent example and tend to be in great danger all the time. These are not virtues associated with chaos. Note that lawful-good creatures seek what is best for the greatest possible number of thinking, deserving beings. This generally includes some measure of freedom and diversity—elves are just as deserving of the fruits of peace as are dwarves, halflings, humans, and other races who have enough self control not to act in a predatory fashion all the time. Only neutral or evil lawful beings seek to establish rigid codes that much be slavishly followed. Ω

Game Wizards #1

Continued from page 35

thief's whip into our fantasy thief quickly whipping the monster around the neck and pulling it off the tower.

Regarding film editing, I discovered a neat trick during the fight scenes. When the director, Flint, or the producer, Peter, wanted the swing of a sword or mace to seem a little more deadly, all they had to do was take a few frames of film out of the swing; the entire thing then sped up and looked great.

Then there was the problem of resolving what fantasy things look like. Imagine getting asked questions like: What does a dragon in flight look like? When a dragon breathes fire while it's flying, why doesn't it run into its own flames? Can you tell from looking at a hammer if it's magical? When a cleric uses a healing spell, what does his magic look like? When a magical sword is in operation, how can anyone tell? When an evil wizard uses magic to stop arrows and spells from striking him, what happens? This went on and on and

on and on from *morning until late into the night with no sign of stop*—excuse me. I still wake up screaming from the memories. The fantasy questions I was asked on a nonstop basis were all very logical and important to the story. Lucky for me, I have a fairly good imagination and was able to answer them all. The special effects we got out of the answers helped create one of the most interesting fantasy films you're going to see in a long time.

One of the most interesting effects was the summoning of the fire elemental. The evil wizard throws a huge magical ruby to the floor, and up springs a fire elemental to throw fireballs at our heroes. On the set, a charming real-life ballerina was dressed up in a red body stocking. Flint gave her the cue, and Peter at the camera filmed her rising up from a yoga-style sitting position and slowly doing spins. David in the background watched the monitor and smiled, as he was the only one who could fully imagine the great effects the computers were going to create. That's the hyperReality part of the film. When you see the matching of the live action

with the computer backgrounds and special effects, the entire process is always stunning. In the video, the ballerina is covered in flames, and dazzling fireballs launch themselves from her hands. It's a breathtaking effect sure to please owners of the game. I've watched this scene hundreds of times, and I still get goose bumps every time I see it.

There are lots of other things I could tell you about, from working with the backgrounds of each actor's character to the use of my dice bag to hold the jewels the thief stole from the wizard. But I think I've given you enough of the flavor of the making of the video to whet your appetite to see it. It's a great video all by itself, and the DRAGON STRIKE game is equally good. You and your friends should give it a try. If you can't find it in your stores, order it by name. You'll find hours of fun packed in the box. Finally, to answer the unasked question: Yes, there will be another video hyperReality game next year—and it will be even better than the first one. Ω

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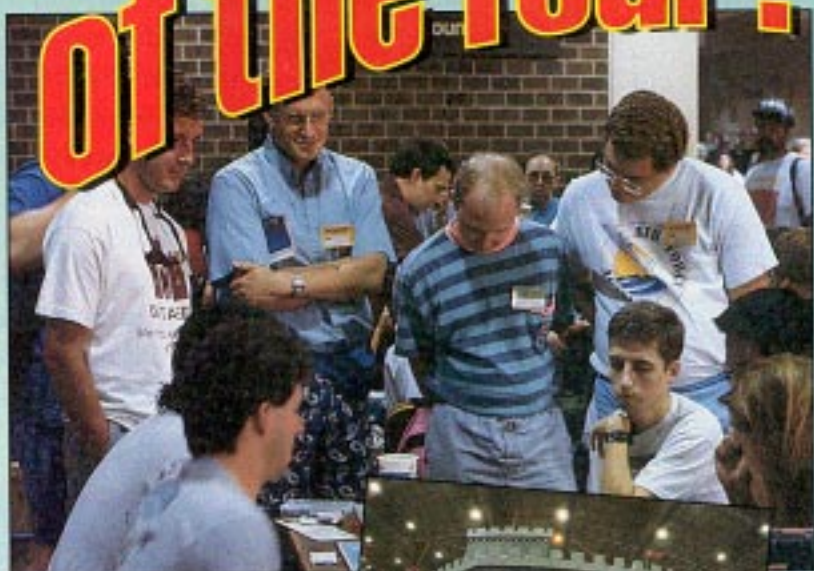
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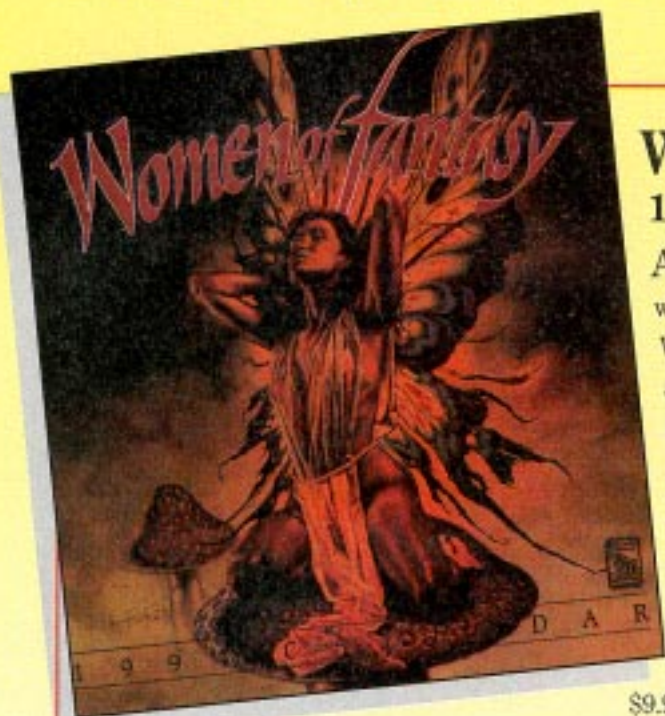
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Coming Soon From TSR!



The Game Wizards

#2

The little engine that could: the AMAZING ENGINE™ story

by Karen S. Boomgarden

Engine: An agent, instrument, or means of accomplishment. *Archaic.*

When the members of my product group first suggested the concept of the AMAZING ENGINE™ system, I was skeptical. A stand-alone rules set, usable with any kind of fantasy or science-fiction setting we could dream up?

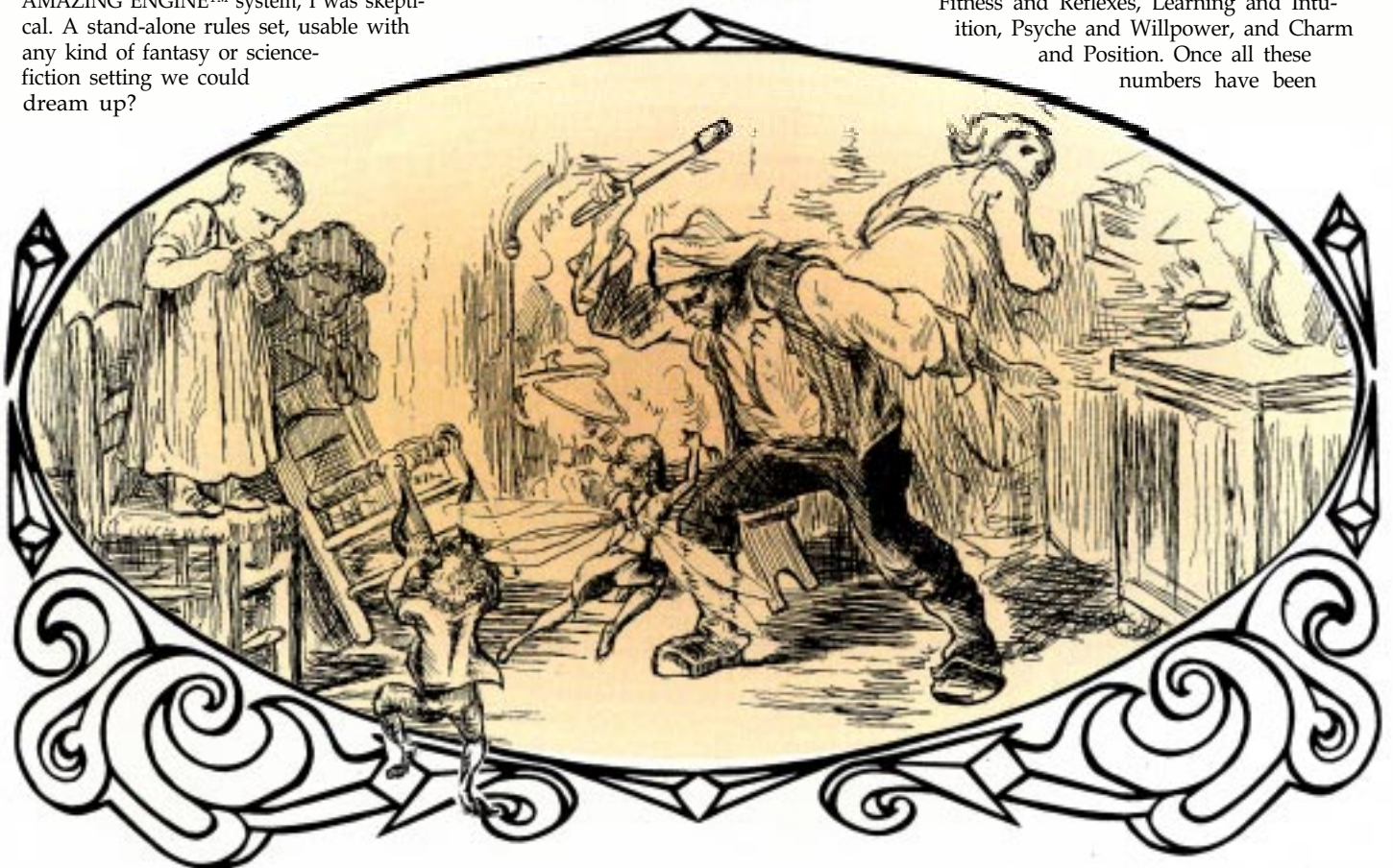
Complete basic rules in only 32 pages? Whole game settings (with attendant rules modifications and specifics) in only 128 pages? Sure. Right. Oh, and one more thing: The players earn the experience points, not the characters, and they can take those experience points along to other game settings within the system.

It'll never work, I thought.

There was much debate about this system, and many meetings and head-bash-

ings were held. We finally hit on a concept that would make all of the above workable, playable, and—above all—fun. The linchpin in the AMAZING ENGINE system is the idea of the “player core.” It’s the engine that makes everything else go.

The player core is a shell, if you will, created by dice rolls. There are four pools into which the points go: Physique, Intellect, Spirit, and Influence. Each of these, in turn is split into two sub-categories: Fitness and Reflexes, Learning and Intuition, Psyche and Willpower, and Charm and Position. Once all these numbers have been

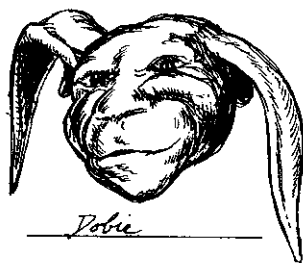


rolled and assigned, and minor modifications (explained in the System Guide) have been made, you are ready to determine the Stamina points and Body points this core will have. These numbers form the basis, or core, for as many player characters as you care to make from this blueprint. All characters created from a single core have basically the same makeup; all are strong if the Physique pool has high numbers, all are "movers and shakers" if the Influence pool contains the most points, and so on. That is not to imply that they're the same character, however. Far from it.

FOR FAERIE, QUEEN, AND COUNTRY is the first release for this game system. Its setting is an alternate Victorian England with Victoria on the throne, to be sure, but with several interesting (some might say in the Chinese sense of the word) twists. History in the FQC world didn't run quite the way you know it. In this Britain of the 1870s, America won the Revolutionary War but lost the War of 1812, and it is now a penal colony, as is Australia. The Tuatha de Danann (Irish faeries) are represented in Parliament and are currently involved in heated debates with the English over the "Irish Question." The British, in turn, maintain embassies in every Tuatha sidh (barrow). The Unseelie Court (the evil Scots faeries) are the ultimate enemy of the Monarchy; allied with them are the practitioners of the Art, who style themselves "The Esteemed Order of Thaumaturgists" — unwholesome magicians who dabble in summonings and the like. Their mission, as they see it, is to remove the Hanoverian usurper from the throne and restore the Stuarts, in the person of James of Calais.

Mortals (humans) and faeries have been living side by side for centuries, and have intermarried quite regularly. There are full-blooded humans, some who are "tainted" (with a little faerie blood, but not enough to make a difference), those who are "marked" (having some faerie blood, perhaps manifesting in pointed ears or cat's pupils), others who are "blooded" (being half-breeds, noticeably faerie in

appearance), and full-blooded faeries. Your character could be any one of these, with attendant bonuses and penalties. (Mine was a full-blooded Tuatha de Danann, a feat requiring a percentile roll of 95-00.)



Let me recount, as best I can recall, a single night's playtesting. Among our party were a Welsh folk doctor who was part piskie, a Scots sorcerer (also part faerie, but I don't remember the type), a mercenary Frenchman (whose name was Guy, pronounced "ghee," but who I always called "Mister Wog") who was a full human, a tainted tabloid journalist, and another bloke who was part *gwartheg y llyn* (a Welsh water faerie). Oh, and there was my character's cousin, a part-Tuatha fellow with tendencies to dabble in hocus-pocus. We were all hired by the owner of a music hall to root out the cause of the bangings and knockings in its walls. While we were at it, we were to find out how costumes and props kept disappearing.

After many minutes of poking around in the theatre itself and causing minor havoc backstage, we wound up in the basement. There we found a pipe leading into the sewers, which led eventually to the Thames, and some of our merry band felt it necessary to find the sewer entrance and trace the lines to their source. (Why they thought the bogey was in the sewers, my character could never understand. They're so smelly! Um, the sewers, not the bogeys—well, some bogeys are, I s'pose. . . . Sorry, I'm slipping into her thoughts again.)

The group split up (bad move, sure, but in playtesting it's a logical step), and then what went into the sewers ran into a band of anarchists who were plotting a demonstration against the Queen. They were Communist anarchists, if I recall correctly. Our fine fellows had to "blend in" and found themselves having to make impromptu impassioned speeches about evil property owners and the proletariat. They were doing okay, too; the Welsh doctor cast some sort of glamour on himself so he could sneak out to the back of the line and delay his impending doom. They were doing very well, in fact, until the ogre-thing that lived in that part of the sewer came up behind one of the group and started hitting. Hard. Repeatedly. (I wasn't there at the time, so I don't know how they escaped, but they did.)

Meanwhile, back in the basement of the

music hall, my character's cousin (the sometime-magician) saw a fly buzzing in and out of the pipe leading to the sewer (logical, I thought). We'd heard a little knocking, too, but nothing terribly interesting or arcane-sounding, to speak of. Cousin dear pulled out a cast-iron fry pan from his coat (deep pockets, eh what?), and squatted before the pipe opening, waiting with fry pan raised in anticipation of squashing anything that came out. Nothing came out except the fly—which buzzed behind him, changed into a huge green slimy dripping long-nailed big-fanged bug-eyed beastie, grabbed the fry pan, and whanged him on the head with it. He spent the rest of the night resting quietly on that cold, clammy floor, poor dear.

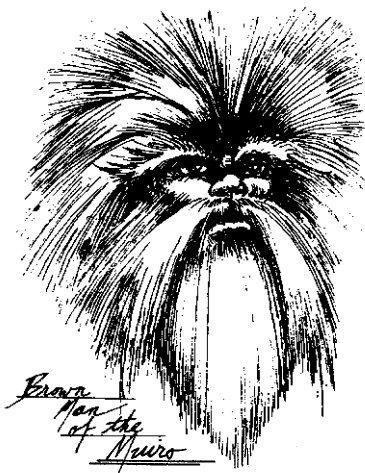
Those of us who were still awake did battle with the creature, finally taking it down with a well-placed rifle shot, if I recall correctly, to the chest. After all that racket, it was no surprise to hear knocking and banging (done with great relish and enjoyment, it seemed to me) on the other side of the basement wall. Someone knocked a hole in the wall, and there, looking at us with huge bobble eyes, was a knockey-boh. It was cute, in that ugly sort of way, and manic, too—talked a kilometre a minute, he did. Turned out he worked for the sewer-dwelling ogre thing and did only what he was told to do, which was to make lots of noise in the music hall. So, of course, we extracted a promise from him that he'd be quieter in the future (it was the least we could do).

We never did find out what was taking the costumes, though.

So, you're saying, what's different? What's the big deal with this new system? Role-playing.



Honest. I didn't have to roll a die once during the evening's session. The story's the important thing, and this system is designed to allow maximum role-play with minimum roll-play. (It can easily be made to go the other way, too, but that wasn't the focus of FOR FAERIE, QUEEN, AND COUNTRY). Even the magic system strengthens the role-playing aspect. Let



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me explain.

Magic spells are created individually, by each character who can use them. Some can be created on the spot; others take some time and planning. There's a simple formula to follow, which at its most basic calls for an agent, an action, and a target. The agent is usually the caster; the action is what's going to be done; and the target is what the action's being done to (e.g., "Change that person into a pig").

That's pretty simple, right? Right, but it's too simple. Everybody and his brother would be casting spells if that's really all there was to it. That's why there are conditions, other things that have to be specified that make any given spell more difficult ("Change that person into a pig until such time as he is kissed by a Wal-lachian princess"). The spell will last longer than an instant, so it's more difficult. Permanency grants the highest level of difficulty.

Well, now that it's so hard, how do you make it work? You add taboos. Taboos are restrictions you set on the spell or the caster, to make the spell easier to cast. Perhaps you wind up with a spell you have to cast on your birthday, wearing green from head to! toe, while standing in the room where you were born (that's what one of our players ended up with). This way, you're making the spell easier to cast and making its chances for success greater, but you're limiting the situations in which you can cast it. (It's not fair to think up a spell on the spot while standing in a field of brown-eyed susans, and make one of the requirements a brown-eyed Susan.)

The magic system of FOR FAERIE, QUEEN, AND COUNTRY is by far the most complicated part of the game. Not all players need to worry about it. But for those who enjoy playing magicians, enjoy theatrics, and don't mind making some pregame preparations, it's grand fun. Making up incantations on the spot taxes your brain, and adds to the excitement of the game!

The church played a prominent role in Victorian England, and so it does here. Priests have powers over faerie; they can sanctify a place; they can dispel charms and glamours; and they can fortify their congregations' faith. We have created several denominations for the FQC universe. Player-character priests can be of any denomination the player chooses (with minor restrictions due to nationality), and all have the same kinds of powers; no one denomination is "better" than another. Those who are familiar with faerie lore

will recall that hallowed ground is anathema to the little people; they dislike church bells and holy symbols, and holy water is an effective deterrent to most types of faerie creatures.

We also include a complete listing of faerie types with game statistics and physical descriptions (all taken from *Peak-Marf-in's Book of Faerie*, a wonderfully obscure reference text—so obscure, in fact, we had to make it all up). Following that, there is a "tour guide" taken from another even more obscure reference text, *Crompton's Illustrated Tour Book of Great Britain*. In this section, you'll find overviews of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and specific places of interest, including faerie activity in each country. Some places can become adventure hooks for one-nighters. What about investigating reports of building materials being moved from one site to another, causing major

delays in the building of a new church? Perhaps your characters will need to infiltrate a meeting of the Esteemed Order being held in the secret room of Glamis Castle?

To complete your Victorian fantasy experience, we include a chapter on "How to Speak Proper." This covers

criminal slang, rural speech, and general tendencies for each nationality (Scots, Irish, Welsh, and English). You'll be crackin' about the lassie ye ken from Edinburgh in no time. There are also sections about general knowledge: travel information, price lists for everything from paper to Moule's Patent Earth Closet (don't even ask), and lists of things that have already been invented (or not, as the case may be), so everyone will be on the same wavelength. (They didn't know about wavelengths then, of course, as they didn't have radios.) The history section includes general tendencies of other nationalities; it's vital to your survival, for instance, to know that all Frenchmen are dastardly to the core and not to be trusted. (Mister Wog proved that, beautifully.)

If you've always wanted to put on a deerstalker hat, pick up a meerschaum pipe, take your brass-knobbed walking stick, and stroll down the foggy streets of the East End in search of the black annis that's been stalking the fishmongers, here's your chance. FOR FAERIE, QUEEN, AND COUNTRY presents a Victorian England not quite like any others we've seen before. As soon as my woolen cloak dries out from the dunking it took in the Thames, I'll be back for more.

Ω

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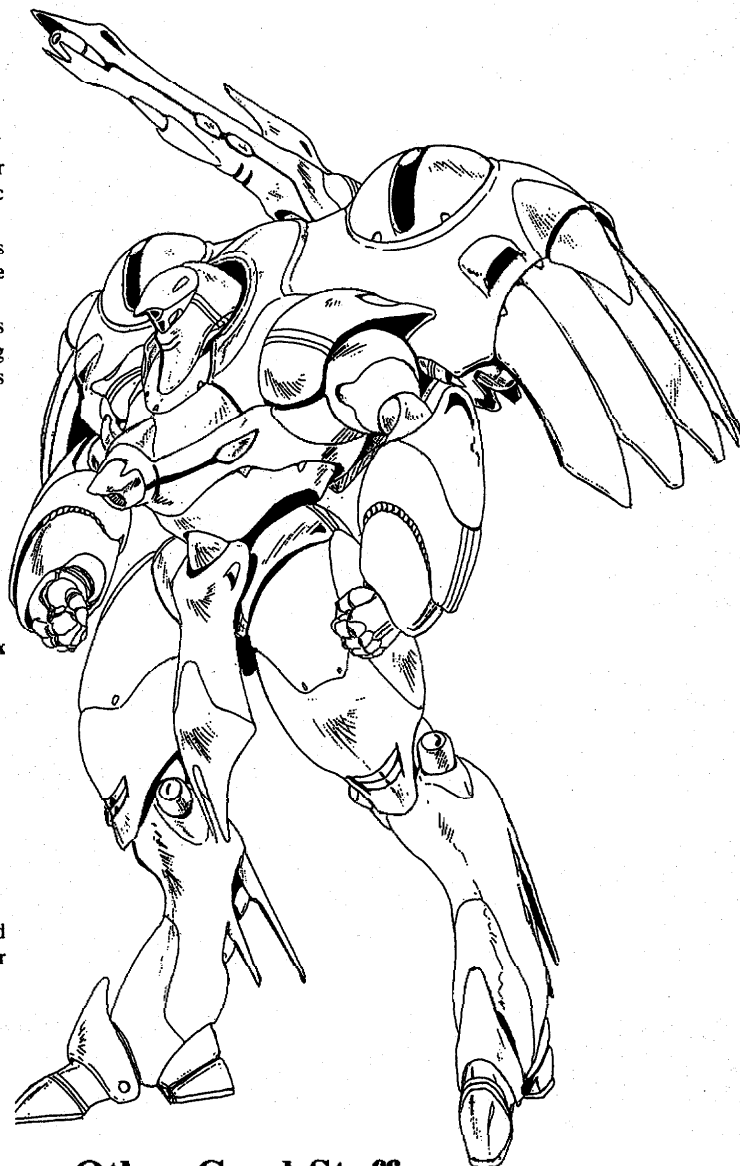
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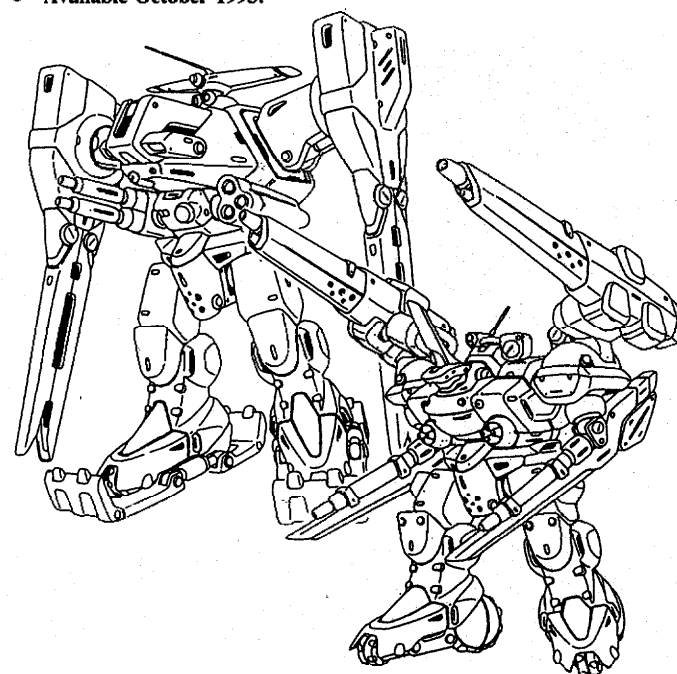
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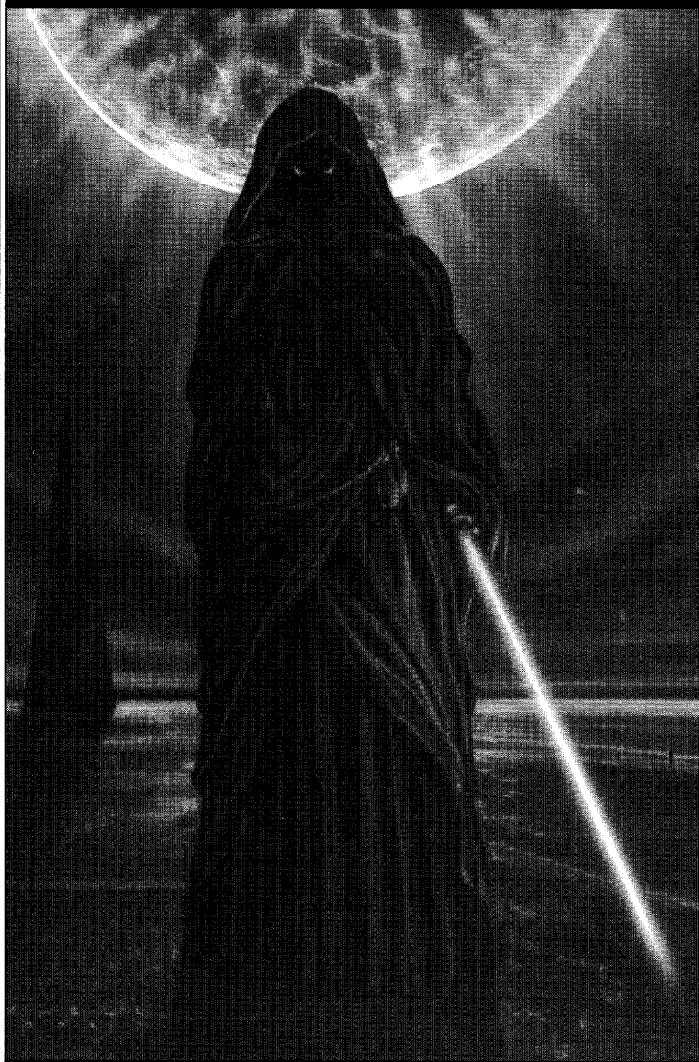
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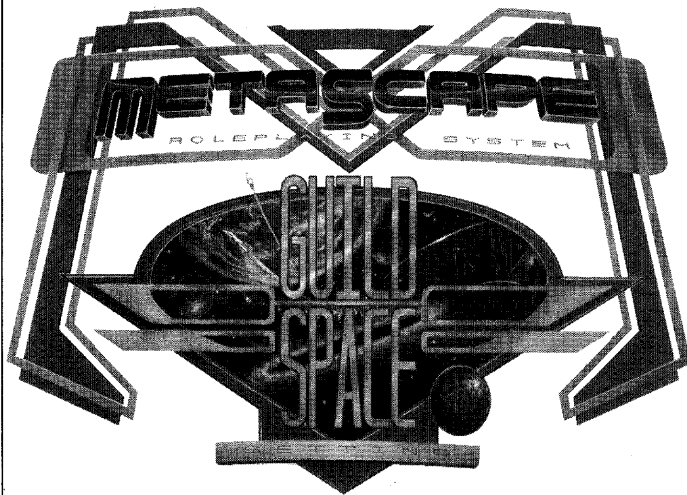
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T

By Steven E. Schend

HE MARVEL-PHILE

The coming of the GATHERERS™!



Well, it's been only a few months since the release of MHR3 *AVENGERS™ Archives*, and already it's in need of updating! Are we ever going to be able to keep up with the changes in the MARVEL UNIVERSE™? The newest villains on the block are by far the most dangerous foes the assembled Avengers have ever faced—for many of their numbers were once Avengers themselves! Intrigued? Me, too! So, to satisfy everyone's curiosity, I present to you the vengeful Proctor and his Gatherers, enemies from other worlds!

PROCTOR™

F EX (20) **Health: 80**
 A EX (20)
 S EX (20) **Karma: 70**
E EX (20)
 R RM (30) **Resources: Monstrous (75)**
 I GD (10)
P RM (30) Popularity: 0

KNOWN POWERS:

Like Magdalene below, it is uncertain whether Proctor's powers are natural or artificial. He does not have any immediately apparent focus for his power like Magdalene, but his armored breastplate and gauntlets contain what appear to be cybernetic implants. Given the lack of obvious technological support, Proctor's powers must be currently considered as innate and natural.

Body armor: Proctor has Incredible (40) Resistance to energy attacks and Remarkable (30) resistance to physical and Force attacks.

"Chemical control": Proctor claims to be able to "realign chemical imbalances within the brain" of people from alternate timelines. Consider this a Remarkable (30) level power to relieve the pain felt by alternate-world heroes transported to the game world. Due to inconsistencies in who needs this treatment and how it is used, this may be nothing more than a panacea used by Proctor to manipulate his Gatherers, and his "realignment" a

simple disguise for his mental manipulation of a pawn.

Energy bolts: Proctor can project Amazing (150) rank Energy or Force bolts through his eyes and hands.

Psionics: Proctor exhibits a wide variety of advanced psionic powers, the exact number currently unknown. Powers he has exhibited thus far are the following:

***Mental control:** Proctor can control the minds of living beings with Excellent (20) rank ability. He generally uses this power to cloud the memories and minds of his pawns, disguising the true nature of his Gatherings and making the Gatherers easier to manipulate.

***Neural disruption:** With a touch, Proctor can inflict Amazing (50) rank damage directly into a being's nervous system. This power bypasses all standard types of natural body armor, directly stimulating the nerves. However, artificial and independent armors (like Iron Man's armor or even the Black Knight's light chain mail) and any defenses against mental attacks serve to protect from the effects of this power.

***Telepathic rapport:** Proctor shares a Good (10) rank telepathic rapport with Cassandra. None of the other Gatherers are aware of this link. Proctor uses this link to communicate hidden agendas to Cassandra which she reinforces during a Gathering without exposing any of Proctor's hidden plans.

***Telepathy:** Proctor has an Excellent (20) rank ability to read thoughts and memories, though he has Shift 0 range and must be in physical contact with a target to use this ability.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:

Proctor is a master planner and manipulator, who pulls the strings of pawns from across dozens of worlds. From his citadel hidden in the Andes mountains, Proctor enjoys deceiving everyone, including his own Gatherers when it suits his purpose. He has been playing these games for years, it appears, and no one ever knows the true extent of his reach. Even his most trusted ally, Cassandra, is powerless to determine when Proctor is being truthful or lying.

Regardless of his motivation, Proctor is supremely confident in his position as leader of the Gatherers; despite their formidable powers, Proctor rules them with superiority and not a little fear. Despite his claims of ultimate authority, he is in a partnership with Ute, a crippled Watcher from an alternate timeline who dwells in secret chambers in or beneath Proctor's

Citadel. It is probable that Proctor's advanced technology has been gained from his relationship with Ute.

Not prone to melodrama, Proctor is a cold and calculating character who does not disclose any information that he does not wish revealed. The only time he loses his formidable temper is over Sersi and his implications regarding her alternate-timeline counterparts' destruction of their worlds, the worlds from which Proctor has recruited his Gatherers.

In the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game, Proctor would be a great crossover villain, sending his Gatherers to your game world to attack that world's Avengers or any reasonable facsimile thereof—they could attack your heroes! If any of your campaign's former PCs were slain in battle, Proctor would be likely to use an other-worldly analogue of the dead character to confuse and torment your heroes.

Given the activity surrounding Marvel Earth and the fun he's had in the past with the Avengers, that Elder of the Universe, the Grandmaster, might want to recruit your heroes! to fight the Gatherers and aid the Avengers. When crossing dimensions and timelines, anything's possible especially with Proctor running the show!

CASSANDRA™

F PR (4) **Health: 36**
A TY (6)
S TY (6) **Karma: 70**
E EX (20)
R GD (10) **Resources: Unknown**
I EX (20)
P IN (40) **Popularity: 0**

KNOWN POWERS:

Telepathic suggestions: Cassandra has an Excellent (20) rank telepathic power that makes her opponents underestimate her (any susceptible mind within one area that fails a Psyche FEAT against her power's rank). This typically manifests itself with a bit of role-playing on Cassandra's part, when people believe she is no more than a harmless old woman.

Telepathy: Cassandra has an Excellent (20) rank telepathic power to read people's memories. She can also use this mental power in ways similar to Proctor's "Chemical Control" power.

Eye blasts: Cassandra's most potent power is her psionic eyebeams, usually kept hidden behind a wide red visor. With a range of two areas, her eyebeams cause Amazing (50) rank Force damage to surrounding areas and materials. In addition

to the above damage, Cassandra's power affects living beings' brains and central nervous systems as well, causing victims to suffer as if hit by both Energy and Force attacks. Use the Battle Effects Table to determine the possible special effects of this attack. For example, if Cassandra's attack roll was a yellow result, her victim would need to check for a Slam (from the Force column) and a Stun (from the Energy column). After exposure to Cassandra's psionic eyebeams, a victim's physical attributes (FASE) are reduced by -1CS (-2CS if an Endurance FEAT roll is failed) for 1-10 turns; nonhuman characters (Olympians, Eternals, artificial beings) do not incur these effects of Cassandra's power. Cassandra can focus this attack against a single individual or she can cause it to fire widely, affecting all targets in her area and one adjacent area of her choice at -2CS.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:

Cassandra is the most bitter, ruthless, and cruel of the Gatherers. A wizened old crone, she appears to be a small and weak old woman, but her aged body is incredibly powerful. She wields immense power with abandon, enjoying the pain and suffering it inflicts on her victims. She appears to delight in finding out hidden, ugly secrets, using her telepathy. She seems to have been a Gatherer the longest, and assumes the role of tactical leader when on a Gathering.

Though Cassandra does not have an analogue on Marvel Earth, she could easily have a younger analogue on your campaign world. To add some spice to the role-playing, have your heroes go up against the Gatherers as they try to eliminate Cassandra's doppelganger at age 14 before her powers emerge (this is assuming she's a mutant)! Again, Cassandra's greatest asset is letting people underestimate her; if role-played well, this Gatherer will get the drop on the heroes every time!

MAGDALENE™

F GD (10) **Health: 135**
A EX (20)
S MN (75) **Karma: 22**
E RM (30)
R TY (6) **Resources: Unknown**
I TY (6)
P GD (10) **Popularity: 0**

KNOWN POWERS:

There is not enough evidence to prove whether Magdalene's powers are natural or artificial at the current time. Based on

the circumstantial data collected to this point, it seems more likely that Magdalene's powers are artificial, and they are defined as such below.

EQUIPMENT:

Cybernetic armor & power lance: Magdalene wears a silver and gold modular suit of advanced technological armor and wields a large lance of similar technologies.

Together, they seem to be the focus of Magdalene's power. The capabilities of Magdalene's armor and lance are as follows:

Body armor: Magdalene's armor provides her with Remarkable (30) protection from physical, Force, and Energy attacks.

Energy shield: Magdalene can erect a 1-area diameter wall of energy that provides Monstrous (75) protection against all physical, Force, and Energy attacks from one direction. The shifting energy pulses that make up this shield effectively act as a force screen to equally repel any objects or people away from the field.

Force bolt: Magdalene's force bolts are projected through her lance. Her Amazing (50) rank Force bolts have a range of eight areas.

"Living circuitry": In some unknown way, Magdalene's body, power, and equipment are intimately linked in such a way as to preclude any external manipulation. This gives Magdalene's armor and lance Monstrous (75) resistance to attacks which affect machines or inanimate matter; this includes any manipulations on a molecular level. This effectively counters the matter-manipulating powers of Avengers like Sersi or Dr. Pym.

Sensor array: Magdalene's armor contains some portable sensor arrays that detect the following energies with Excellent (20) ability: heat, kinetic (movement), and life.

Shock pulse: On contact with her target, Magdalene can release a Monstrous (75) burst of energy through her lance. Her gloves (or some unknown cybernetics) insulate her from the effects of the energy. It is unknown if this can be generated along the surface of her armor, or whether she can release such energy without the lance.

"Slashway" teleportation: This power generates a Shift X (150) rank teleportation field. She controls the destination of the "slashway" and she partially controls its duration; with a Green Psyche FEAT roll, Magdalene can maintain or instantly shut down a slashway.

WEAKNESS:

It presently seems that much of Magda-

lene's power is directed through her lance. If she were to be separated from her lance, it is possible that her offensive capabilities would be reduced (her Energy shield, Force bolt, Shock pulse, and Teleportation abilities are lost along with the lance.). It may even cause a reduction in her physical statistics (-1CS to Agility, -2CS to Endurance and Strength).

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:

Magdalene is a fiercely passionate woman, furious in battle and obsessive in love. She is, by far, the most versatile of the Gatherers, but she is easily distracted by any harm to her lover, the Swordsman. Her counterpart on Marvel Earth, the fashion model Marissa Darrow, had no powers but was just as forceful a personality. Despite her aggressive nature, Proctor holds her in his control with reminders of their lost love and his saving her life in the past. When she learned that Proctor had sent an alternate timeline Vision (see *Group history* below) to kill the Swordsman, however, Magdalene lashed out and struck Proctor with a Force bolt. Proctor's degree of future control of Magdalene is now in doubt.

The origin of her power is unknown, though Magdalene's constant exclamations of "By the Seventh Ring!" and other rings circumstantially suggest ties with the rings of Saturn. This could be some false memories or psychological imprinting, or a manner of mind control by Proctor, whose technology is certainly capable of creating Magdalene's armor and lance. (Or, if Magdalene's powers are indeed internal, not artificial, this exclamation may indicate some relation to the Eternals of Saturn's moon, Titan.)

In your game world, Magdalene is a formidable foe no matter who her allies are. Her teleportation power negates any sense of security the heroes might have in their "impregnable" headquarters. If given a reason to attack, Magdalene's rage backed by her power is more than a match for many heroes. Given her ties to Proctor, though, she is best used in conjunction with any of his schemes.

SLOTH™

F RM (30) **Health:** 195
A IN (40)
S AM (50) **Karma:** 26
E MN (75)
R TY (6) **Resources:** Unknown
I GD (10)
P GD (10) **Popularity:** 0

KNOWN POWERS:

Bestial appearance: Sloth appears to permanently be transformed into a large, brown-furred creature nine feet in height, though he always slouches under a metallic harness, bringing his height to about seven feet. (Consider Sloth's appearance as linked, permanent versions of the Shapechange and Size alteration-Growth powers.)

Claws: Sloth's inhuman form grants him Incredible (40) material strength foot and hand claws that, when coupled with his strength, can inflict up to his maximum of Incredible (40) Edged Attacks damage.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:

Sloth is a large, powerful humanoid beast with fur and claws. He speaks with a slight accent, suggesting a Scottish or Irish background. He seems congenial and polite, with a kind but loyal manner that belies his bestial appearance. He does not fight in anger, but with calculation and skill, using just enough force to get the job done. He also seems to have close bonds with Cassandra, due to their long relationship with the Gatherers. Though he doesn't exist in the current Marvel Earth, Sloth's joking, easy-going manners and powers fit within his team as the Beast did within the Avengers several few years ago.

As with Cassandra, Sloth's analogue may exist on your campaign's Earth. If you have a hero with similar animal-based powers, perhaps he is Sloth's counterpart and only has to wait for some terrible accident that boosts or changes his powers to this powerful beast-form.

TABULA™

F GD (10) **Health:** 60
A EX (20)
S GD (10) **Karma:** 50
E EX (20)
R GD (10) **Resources:** Unknown
I EX (20)
P EX (20) **Popularity:** 0

KNOWN POWERS:

Artificial construction: Tabula appears to be an artificial being, closer to a Life Model Decoy or the original Adaptoid than an independent artificial lifeform. Its base form has no identifiable features, being a blank humanoid shape with no face or secondary characteristics. It is unknown whether Tabula is susceptible to mental attacks.

Blending: Tabula can alter its surface coloration to blend in to an area with Excellent (20) ability; if Tabula does not

move, this power acts as Excellent rank Invisibility.

Elongation: Tabula possesses Excellent (20) rank stretching power. In addition, Tabula gains a + 1CS on its Strength score when engaged in Grappling combat.

Imitation: Tabula's primary power is its Incredible (40) rank Imitation power, which allows it to alter its own body to appear to be someone else. Tabula can alter its body size by up to 30% when using this power, but cannot change to any body structure other than that of a bipedal humanoid.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:

By its own nature, Tabula's character is what it needs to be for the shape it is wearing. It acts almost flawlessly like the person it imitates, fooling all but the most perceptive of observers. Its base personality has a few discernible traits, such as an insatiable curiosity and a subsequent disregard for Proctor's authority. Tabula was only recently released from stasis, a punishment meted out by Proctor for some past transgression. Still, despite its chastisement, Tabula may be a weak link in Proctor's Gatherers.

Tabula is easily inserted into any game campaign as the ultimate deep cover agent, as it so easily mimics and maintains the appearances of anyone. If you choose to bring the Gatherers into your campaign, use Tabula to its best advantage: If a player is absent from the game, have his or her character still arrive to play. Few need know that Tabula is in the hero's place for now.

GROUP HISTORY:

The Avengers' first encountered Magdalene and the Swordsman during the Gatherers' initial ambush. Though the heroes insisted he was dead in this timeline, the Swordsman refused to accept that, not realizing then his otherworldly origins. Proctor was clouding his mind about his previous existence in another timeline. Forced to flee in defeat, Magdalene and the Swordsman have met the Avengers on a number of occasions since then, accompanied by the other Gatherers. During these missions, the Swordsman was subject to painful headaches, allegedly due to his problems assimilating to a different Earth. Of the Gatherers' strike force, he was the only one whose counterpart was an Avenger on this world (Marvel Earth) as on his own.

After "gathering" another lone survivor of a destroyed world, Proctor sent his

team to Avengers' Mansion, hoping to find this world's counterpart to the wounded Coal Tiger. After infiltrating the headquarters and finding the analogue was T'Challa of Wakanda, the Black Panther, the Gatherers engaged the now-prepared Avengers. They quickly defeated the heroes and fled to Wakanda, hoping to kill the Black Panther to allow the Coal Tiger to live on this world. The Avengers followed and, with the help of the Wakandan Air Forces, stopped the Gatherers; surprisingly, the Swordsman saved the life of the Black Panther by turning against Cassandra. He had been fighting his conscience for months, vaguely remembering his status as a hero but now being forced to act as a villain. In the fight, the villains were separated, and the Swordsman was captured before he could flee with the others.

As a captive of the Avengers, the Swordsman's recurring headaches grew less frequent and his memory slowly returned, both perhaps side effects of being separated from Proctor's power. With his returning memory came an intense hatred of the Vision, whom the Swordsman swore destroyed the Avengers on his world. His memories showed subtle differences from what Marvel Earth's Avengers knew, such as his mistaking a hologram of Moondragon for his lost love, Mantis. He eventually came to terms with his status and grew to befriend this world's Vision. He also became more active with the Avengers, coming to their aid on a few occasions.

The final assault on the Avengers involved Proctor's recruitment of a highly emotional (if not totally insane) Vision from a dying timeline. Capturing Marvel Earth's Vision, Proctor supplanted his brain into the doppelganger's body and placed the Gatherer/Vision's brain into the original Vision's body. Returned to Avengers' Mansion, the Gatherer/Vision stopped Sersi's rampage against her fellow Avengers. The Gatherer/Vision stayed undercover unnoticed, primarily due to the upsets over Sersi's destabilizing mental condition. Eventually, the Gatherer made his move and did Proctor's will by attempting to assassinate the Swordsman. He then approached Crystal, hoping to gain her affections here where he failed on his world. This simply brought his status as a Gatherer to the fore, and he was neutralized by Sersi.

Little conclusive is known about the mysterious Gatherers and their equally enigmatic leader, Proctor. Apparently,

Proctor has been at work for years, "gathering" his allies from other timelines. Though perceived as villains by the Avengers, the Gatherers may not be evil by nature, though Proctor fits the description. Proctor recruits his Gatherers from dying worlds to allegedly keep other worlds from dying in a like manner; all their worlds were destroyed by some unknown action or inaction of the Avengers. The destruction of these many Earths are related to Proctor's obsessive fury regarding Sersi. He has asserted that he is her one true love, and she will destroy the world if she's not stopped. The only ties that hold the Gatherers together are their fear or respect for Proctor and hatred for the Avengers.

Using his mental powers, Proctor often supplants his agents' normal thoughts with his own hatreds to make them more effective against the Avengers. Because of these hatreds and the extreme natures of many of the Gatherers, the team is astonishingly brutal and forceful during its missions but lacks any measured amount of teamwork and cooperation.

Much of Proctor's hatred stems from some guilt and pain regarding some romantic relationships and Sersi. He refers to himself as "her one true Gann Josin," an Eternal term and state that is an intimate mental union between two people, a joining that makes them lifelong soulmates. Whether he gained part of Sersi's power along with this linking, Proctor's extreme emotions mimic Sersi's recent uncontrolled mood swings. Based on his references to unrequited or lost love and a hatred of being manipulated by Sersi, Proctor could be an otherworldly analogue of this Earth's Black Knight. 📖

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What's your opinion?

What is the future direction of role-playing games? What problems do you have with your role-playing campaign? Turn to this issue's "Forum" and see what others think—then tell us what you think!

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GAMES CENTRES

FORUM

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I'm writing to you for several reasons. First, I'd like to correct Helaina Martin, who wrote a letter to "Forum" in DRAGON issue #186. She remarked that on the cover of *Azure Bonds*, Alias's armor was split down the middle. If you read the book, you find out that it was like that so the bad guys could kill her if she got out of control. But I do agree with Helaina on both points she makes [about women in fantasy gaming and young gamers]. I have met only one female role-player in my life. She was also my "mentor" and one of the best role-players I know. I wish there were more female role-players in my area, but most of the girls I know don't care about RPGs.

The second issue she talked about also strikes a chord with me. I am only 13 years old and have been playing RPGs since I was nine. I really hate it when people think I'm just some kid. The "mentor" I spoke of is 50 years old. What I'm trying to say is that there should be no discrimination whatsoever.

Finally, I'd like to say "Keep up the good work!" to all you hoopy froods at DRAGON Magazine!

Owen Muir
Litchfield CT

Issue #189 was great! The fantasy inspired by the rest of the world makes invaluable game information. A couple of years ago when you first announced implementation of theme-oriented issues, I was skeptical, but so far you've pulled it off without a hitch and #189 was the best yet. As long as you keep inspiring readers/creators to write such great stuff, you'll do just fine. (David Hower's piece was especially good.)

The real reason I'm writing in, however, was to answer the call for information on computer-aided map graphics (in David Casey's letter). I used to live in Gainesville, and I know of a custom printing business that often did projects for the gaming clubs in town. I've seen their work, and it's absolutely great. I checked around and found out that, sure enough, they're still there and still doing a lot of custom

map work. Not only that, but one of the guys who works there is a programmer and has a dungeon-design and random dungeon-generator software package available for Macintosh users, with an IBM version soon to be completed. They occasionally advertise in some local magazines, but their mailing address is:

Atlas Graphics
c/o James Reinhardt
Box 15202
Gainesville, FL 32604-5202

Hopefully opportunities like this won't dampen the creative spirit that makes RPGs what they are, but for those out there with limited time or artistic ability, I guess this might be a godsend.

Well, keep up the good work. Until Elminster decides to settle in one place, make mine DRAGON Magazine!

Peter Rivellini
Clearwater FL

I read Mr. Casey's letter in issue #189, in which he wanted to know where he could find software to help him draw maps and dungeons and such. Perhaps the problem is tunneling in on "dungeon software."

Virtually any PC CADD or Paint program can be used to draw very nice maps. The basics you'll find useful are lines of various thickness for walls, basic shapes (rectangles, circles, arcs) for drawing rooms and curved walls, a "snap" grid option (to constrain your drawing to grid coordinates and keep it neat looking), and text for labeling your maps. In addition, many CADD programs have provisions for creating your own symbol libraries; you could draw up a library of dungeon mapping symbols and save it for future use.

Personally, I have used Dr. Halo for both dungeons and wilderness maps. Now that I have it, I plan to use TurboCADD for starship deck plans for my TRAVELLER* game, and maybe for castle/dungeon floor plans, too.

I'm not suggesting that you must go out and buy an expensive CADD program to draw maps. However, if you already have one, you will find it very useful. If you don't have one, there are several shareware CADD programs available for downloading from BBS or the Internet, such as DANCAD-3D, NORTHCAD, VGACAD, etc. I don't know where in Europe Mr. Casey is, but many of the European universities have Internet connections, and FIDOnet BBS are almost as common in Europe as they are in the U.S. A friendly sysop can "file request" a particular program for you, if he/she/it doesn't already have it on the BBS.

In addition, there are some Paint programs that are inexpensive or come gratis with other

purchases; Dr. Halo/Dr. Genius gets thrown in free with every Genius Mouse sold, and PC Paint comes with every copy of Windows 3.x. Look around. You can probably find something you can use, without breaking your budget.

Cynthia Higginbotham
Metairie LA

In reference to the letter in issue #189 from David A. Casey, regarding software for creating dungeon maps: I haven't found any software specific for dungeon maps. However, you can still make use of your computer for mapping. For many computers, there are a number of CADD (Computer Aided Drafting/Design) packages for under \$500, and paint/drawing packages for under \$200. With CADD software, you can create a library of symbols you frequently use when creating a dungeon map. The advantage of using a CADD program is that you only need to draw a symbol once, save it on a disc, and access it as needed. However, creating a symbols library can be a difficult and tedious task if you're inexperienced with a CADD program.

I would recommend using a Paint program until you get some experience with CADD. Your printed output may not look as professional, but a Paint program is faster and easier to use. Besides, for exterior maps precise line work isn't usually required and most CADD software doesn't have a free-hand sketch mode required for drawing rivers, coastlines, forests, etc.

W.A.N.
Waterbury CT

I would like to respond to a letter you published in issue #189's "Letters" titled "The Army Life." The writer asks about computer aids for maps and dungeons. Besides being a fan of game-world novels and SSI's computer role-playing games, I am a PC home computer consultant. I know there are no programs written with AD&D® maps/dungeons specifically in mind, but there are lots of general CADD programs that can be modified to work, such as Freelance Graphics, Auto-CAD, PC PaintBrush, etc. Also, the Shareware libraries have such programs (for those DMs who cannot spend \$100+ on software). I hope that answers David's question.

I would like to hear other players/DM's opinions on using the computer to help them with the game. I ask this because I am planning to write a library of programs to help both the players and DMs, using the computer to help with the game. At one time, TSR (working with SSI) wrote some programs called the *Dungeon Master's Assistant*, volume 1 and volume 2. What happened to them? With computers costing so little, having a computer help would be easy. A good computer can be bought for \$800 to \$1,000. So let me know how you players/DMs feel about computers helping you out.

Keep the dragon's tail wagging.

John F. Wherry
Lake Forest CA

I am writing in response to the letter from David A. Casey in the letters column of issue #189.

I, too, am in the military. Although I'm in a different branch, my job exposes me to myriad computer systems. I have found that the program PFS: First Publisher might have the capabilities desired for dungeon and wilderness mapping. If combined with mouse and scanner peripherals, there would be no end to your mapmaking abilities, except paper size. PFS:

First Publisher also has text that can be printed onto the same page as your graphics display. Also, the file you create can be transferred into ASCII to be used in a better word-processing program, such as WordPerfect.

William B. Phillips
Patrick AFB FL

Several issues ago, a gentleman asked about a computer program to generate maps for indoor and outdoor use in role-playing. I can heartily recommend a program called Key CAD Complete, by Softkey Software Products, Inc., 21602 North Third Ave., Phoenix AZ 85027. I bought my copy for under \$30 for the IBM, and it works like a charm. It contains architectural, office, and landscape libraries that allow you to quickly design any indoor or outdoor maps. It is easily scalable and contains features that allow you to create custom layouts to use with miniatures by scaling your features to the correct size for your scale. It is easy to use and the documentation walks you through several examples. Combined with a laser printer, it is quite easily capable of producing output worthy of any commercial printer.

Craig Judy
Valley Stream NY

I was recently rereading some of my old issues of DRAGON Magazine, when I noticed something in one of your editorials that disturbed me. In the editorial for the June 1988 issue (#134), dealing with the reasoning (or lack thereof) of those who dislike role-playing games, you made a statement that you could see why games such as paintball could be considered harmful. When I read this article in 1988, I had no real interest in paintball, so I scarcely noticed your comment. However, within the past year I have started playing the game and I have written a couple of articles for various paintball magazines, so I definitely noticed it this time. I found your comments disturbing, because I saw you doing the exact same thing your editorial was complaining about others doing: making a decision on something with false data or no data at all. Presently, paintball is going through all the same troubles with bad press and well-meaning but ill-informed activists that role-playing games are. As a role player, I am considered a satanist who cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality. As a paintballer, I am considered to be a sexist white supremacist who plays war games to practice for an eventual race war or takeover of the United States. All of these concepts are utterly false, but many people believe them and certain unscrupulous groups definitely promote these ideas in order to further their own skewed views or to enhance their finances.

I don't really know why you considered paintball to be dangerous; perhaps you had bad information or a bad experience with paintball. However, let me present you with a little information on paintball. First, paintball has extensive safety regulations to protect players, because it realized that there is some inherent danger in the game if people are not responsible. All players and referees are required to wear special goggles that are designed specifically to withstand the impact of a paintball. Also, many locations now require players to wear face masks in addition to goggles. The velocity that paintball guns fire at is strictly regulated to safe levels through the use of chronographs that measure the speed of a paintball. In

addition, all players are required to use a device called a "barrel plug" to prevent the accidental firing of a paintball gun when off the playing field. Another safety rule is that players under 18 must have written parental permission to play. Perhaps the most important safety rule is that absolutely no physical contact is allowed between players. These rules have made paintball a relatively injury-free game, except for the scrapes, bruises, twisted ankles, and cases of poison ivy that you can expect in any outdoor activity that requires people to run around.

Another important thing to realize is that paintballs are nontoxic and biodegradable. The shell of a paintball is made up of gelatin, and the so-called paint is water soluble and harmless if swallowed (it does taste pretty bad, though). So the cries that paintballers destroy the environment is totally unfounded. As to the concept of all paintballers being white supremacists who secretly harbor desires to commit violence, I find it as ridiculous as the concept that role-playing games cause people to commit suicide or practice satanism.

I hope my letter has changed your view on paintball a bit, because paintball and role-playing games have many similarities. Both are presently victims of misinformation and misunderstanding, and in many ways paintball is simply a large-scale live-action role-playing game, just like the SCA (this is especially true when you consider that some paintball fields hold special theme games that recreate historical battles or follow the plot lines of movies). As a final note, I have noticed that quite a few gamers play or have played paintball (hopefully the antigaming and antipaintball forces will never find this out).

Troy Herman
Tucson AZ

Attention DMs! Looking for new ideas for your campaign? Well, there is a saying that the best ideas are someone else's ideas, improved upon.

For an excellent source of new "old" ideas, I recommend "The Antiques Roadshow"—a British production seen on many PBS TV channels in North America. On "Roadshow," you can expect to see things like furniture with secret doors, drawers, and compartments; guns with hidden daggers; daggers with hidden guns; cane swords and other discreet gentleman's weapons; clever locks; secret opening devices; and more.

Last week I saw an old sea chest with an obvious but false lock on the front with the real lock hidden. This got me to thinking about the possibilities of obvious locks that open to nothing but a wagon load of trouble for the PCs when successfully picked (or opened if the PCs are "lucky" enough to find the key). The purpose of such a "lock" should be very difficult to detect.

This week, I saw a "Chinese River Pirate's" sword that was actually two matched swords made with one flat side to fit together into one scabbard. Neat! "The Antiques Roadshow"—try it, you'll like it.

Dennis Rudolph
Prince George, B.C.

A while ago, I wrote explaining that I have had very good experiences gaming with members of both sexes and have done my best to encourage the participation of anyone who shows the least bit of interest in gaming, be

they male or female.

In that letter I requested that you include my address in full and you kindly did. I included my address because I was not concerned about people writing me "flame" (as we use on the network) letters. It's a good thing I did that. In response to my letter, three very nice people have written me verifying that there are indeed good players of both genders out there. All three of these people are now pen pals with whom I correspond frequently. The knowledge garnered from these people has aided my own campaign, and in return I hope I've aided them.

I wrote this letter to let people know that when they hide their address from people they fear mail from, they are also hiding it from people they can build a great friendship with. Also let me say that I have not received any oppositional mail from any of my other letter submissions (just my luck, I'll probably get swamped with them now).

In closing, let me give thanks to DRAGON Magazine for being a great magazine in which we can voice our views to each other and also for being the catalyst that started my new friendships.

Mathew W. Hurd
Rome NY

Some time ago, many of the letters in "Forum" addressed the concept of player character personality, alignment, and behavior and its place in the AD&D game. If it's not too late, I would like to add my own thoughts.

I hold a B.A. in behavioral psychology and an M.A. in international relations, and have been playing the AD&D game for 14 years (in some cases, using my gaming as research material). In addition, I have DM'ed for 13 years with a variety of individual players and groups. As diverse as the personalities and styles of these players and groups were, they all shared some common factors. Exploiting these factors has helped make the majority of my campaigns popular and successful.

In a general sense, I have found that most players do not care for a given scenario out of context. A single exciting adventure holds little interest when buried in the confines of a dull milieu or campaign. Conversely, in an extended campaign with overriding concerns of importance to a group, even the occasional dry adventure is attacked with vigor and becomes exciting. I have seen several articles in the past addressing ways to hold player interest and tie a campaign together, including the nearly unattainable goal (quest, artifact, etc.), the nearly unbeatable villain, the nearly indestructible magical item, ad infinitum. These ideas work very well, to which the players in my "Quest for the Rod of Seven Parts" campaign will attest.

However, I've found that stimulating interactivity among the players is the key to success. Regardless of the amount and type of treasure, number of battles vs. number of puzzles and riddles, or numbers of dungeons vs. cities vs. wilderness adventures, the players respond to an exercise of their personalities. To this end, there are several "tricks" I use to stimulate such activity.

First and foremost, I do not assign alignments at the beginning of a campaign, nor do I ask a player to declare one when he rolls up a character. I watch the player's actions, note his decisions, and track his activities for an adventure or two. Based on my appraisals of these, I note an alignment *tendency* on my copy of each

character sheet. From then on, I note *major* deviations from that tendency and prescribe penalties to experience points or abilities. I also award extra experience for adhering to those tendencies, but not without telling the player what *actions* sparked the additional award (I never tell the player what tendency I have ascribed to avoid presupposed behavior patterns).

Secondly, I encourage player interaction sans DM knowledge or interference. Players are encouraged to discuss their activities out of my hearing range, pass notes to each other (or to me if they wish), and otherwise manipulate their own characters, addressing me only when my input is necessary. This prevents any "feeling out" of the DM prior to action taken, but also promotes personality behavior in lieu of statistical behavior.

Lastly, players are encouraged to generate histories and personalities for the players around the above activities. At character generation, I tell each player where his character comes from (based on race, primarily) and leave it to him to fill in the details. Often, these details are filled in as the player goes along, never being completely determined. Many times the players would ask me during nongaming periods to help them determine what they would know about the milieu, in the event something came up allowing them to use this expertise. I also have complete tables for determining characteristics of game-children, generated by players whose characters had married and who saw playing the children as an alternative to rolling up new characters. The original tables were drawn up by a genetics major where I attended college, and have been adapted over the years to enhance the characterizations of the children.

Apart from the player characters themselves, I use many aspects of my political-science background to generate scenarios involving interaction of personalities between PCs and NPCs. The concepts of war and diplomacy, international law, and political development provide excellent skeletons for building scenarios, with NPCs based on historical or current political leaders or situations. These scenarios provide the overriding concepts mentioned in the third paragraph, which are used to tie the adventures together. Many of my maps are derived from current Rand McNally or *National Geographic* maps, and many of the precepts for my adventures are taken from current events. You'd be surprised at the excitement generated by PC involvement in a dispute between two desert countries over a piece of land with huge mineral reserves (using the AL-QADIM™ rules as a supplement to normal AD&D procedures), where one leader is a bit insane and the other backed by powerful foreign allies. The interaction of the characters provided more action and interest than the resolution of the war itself (a long series of dice rolls and odds determinations in an otherwise exciting strategic and diplomatic adventure).

I hope that I've provided food for thought on player personality vs. statistical determination. In my opinion, it does provide far more entertainment and generates far more involvement in role playing vs. just playing.

Christopher T. C. Miller
Belleville IL

My friends and I recently decided to begin a new AD&D campaign in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. I decided to go out and get

the new *Complete Bard's Handbook* to add a little spice to the character selection process; we already own the other PHBR books, and the *Complete Bard's Handbook* was to complete the collection. We all found the new handbook to be well written, clear, and complete, yet after reading it our real problems began.

When we have started a new campaign in the past, we have always had a wide variety of character classes and races represented, including an occasional bard. The question in character creation now is "What will the second class of your half-elf multi-classed bard be?" The kits in the handbook are excellent; they are dynamic, well-rounded, and combine a bard and its kit with another class. However, you have a truly awesome character. The half-elf has, by far, the greatest selection of multiclass options available to it, and after considering these options I am sure you will see no reason to play a single-classed character again.

Why play a fighter when you can become a half-elf fighter/blade? The fighter/blade has the abilities of a fighter enhanced by some excellent combat abilities, a couple of thief skills, a fair selection of spells, and some free non-weapon proficiencies. I won't go into detail about multiclassed kits; Andy Shockney did that adequately in issue #187. The kits* in the *Complete Bard's Handbook* are not really kits, but almost separate classes; combining a class with the true bard would not be as interesting. Restricting multiclass combinations to the true bard only is not the answer as I see it. The kits are much too diverse for that option.

Back to the fighter/blade: At 7th level, a fighter has a THACO of 14 and average hit points of 38.5 before any Constitution bonus. He can use any weapon, wear any armor, and can have exceptional strength and Constitution bonuses, and he can specialize in a weapon. These are all of the advantages to becoming a fighter. If a fighter/blade starts at the same time, he will be at 6th level in each class. He will have average hit points of about 24 before Constitution bonuses, a THACO of 15, and the same equipment and ability options as the straight fighter. In addition, he will have advanced weapon techniques, including Blind-fighting to 30' and a bonus to ranged called shots that he can perform better than the fighter. The multiclassed character will also have a few 1st and 2nd level mage spells, four thief abilities (he will likely specialize in detect noise and climb walls), and he will have what I consider to be the equivalent of a paladin's holy sword in a *sword of dancing*. My point here is that the fighter's only real advantages are his hit points and weapon specialization.

Just imagine your fighter/blade recreating a Drizzt Do'Urden tactic by casting a *darkness 15' radius* on his opponent, then jumping in and using either his ranged ability in darkness (a tactic his foe will not have unless he is also a blade) or a weapon in each hand with his weapon handling skill. Wow!

Rechannel your thoughts now to the shadowy world of thieves. As a single-class thief, your PC has, by 7th level, 240 total points to spend on thief abilities. A thief/gypsy or thief/jongleur will have reached 6th level in each class, but will have an edge in spades. At 1st level he will have chosen three bard abilities (pick pockets, detect noise, read languages) to raise with his bard's points, and the other five can be raised with thief's points. By the time he's reached levels 6/6, he will have 295 points to spend on skills. He has 80 points at 1st level

compared to a thief's 60; at each new level, the bard abilities get an average of 5 points and the thief skills get 6 points each, or a total of 45 points per level. A thief spreads his 30 points between all eight skills, giving him less than 4 points on each skill.

Needless to say, the multi-classed character is much better than the single without even considering his other skills. He gets mage spells and, if a jongleur, acrobatic skills far superior to those in the thief acrobat kit. If your multi-classed character is a gypsy, he gets a psionic wild talent, animal lore, and some fortune-telling prowess. Allowing rogues to be multi-classed is like allowing a ranger/paladin to be a multiclassed option. It just does not make sense.

A druid/meistersinger is another extremely powerful combination, again only open to half-elves. This character advances only slightly slower than the druid or bard by themselves and will gain many abilities in return. It is like having a druid with even more animal buddies, more powers in nature, and mage spells to boot. I believe that a multiclassed druid/meistersinger will eventually surpass the single-class druid in levels. Just imagine the advantage the second class will give the druid when he begins fighting for his advancement. The single-class druid is bound to lose a battle or two, but a druid/meistersinger with a good selection of spells will win every time. He will have 6th-level priest spells and potent 4th-level mage spells. The single class druid need be defeated only once, and the druid/meistersinger will catch up and slaughter him.

Specialist mages and mage/loremasters are just about even in their ability. The multiclassed character gets more spells, but they are of slightly lower level than the specialist mage's. The ranger/bard combination is darn near impossible to gain because you will have minimum ability requirements in every ability. Aside from these two classes, you cannot make a single-class kit or even a multiclassed kit with the power, diversity, and excitement of a multi-classed bard.

My group now will consist of almost entirely multiclassed bards if we do not alter the rules a bit. Picture the fighting potential of a group of half-elves who are all part bard. A fighter/blade, a fighter/gallant, a druid/meistersinger, a thief/gypsy, and—believe it or not—a single-classed psionist. The psionist decided to be a half-elf only because it would be easier to explain his existence in the group. We do not need a mage in the group because everyone has either spells or psionic powers.

The existence of these multiclassed kits presents a severe imbalance to play. It started in the *Complete Book of Dwarves* and gets even more imbalanced in the *Complete Bard's Handbook* (I can't wait to see what the *Complete Book of Elves* has in store for us). Maybe some of these bard kits would have been better as kits of other classes; for example, the blade kit in the *Fighter's Handbook*. Besides changing kit affiliation, the only other option we've thought of is slowing multiclass advancement, perhaps requiring them to earn 20% or so more experience to rise a level.

Please don't misunderstand me. I love the *Complete Bard's Handbook*, but an equilibrium needs to be found. If anyone has any great ideas, I would love to hear from you.

Bryan Fairfield
Lincoln NE

I write this in response to the letter about multiclassed characters in issue #187. I totally agree that the AD&D 2nd Edition rules really has no adequate balancing system for dual- and multiclassed characters to make everything even. In fact, they don't even make everything look balanced about multiclassed characters. As soon as one of these characters is picked, he is piled high with enough options to get him out of almost any situation. What this really means is that other players are left out, feeling unneeded and more importantly cheated. I myself have two humans, a priest named Gannon and a wizard named Guinan, both siblings and each of a fairly high level. However, along comes Mr. Multiclass, a fighter/thief/wizard, who is a bit lower in levels but can still come out on top. His name is Lilac, and on top of it all he is a half-elf. Lilac makes my wizard look wimpy, to say the least, since not only can the half-elf cast spells but he also has the hit points of a warrior and the abilities of a thief to back him up. Who needs a 9th-level wizard when you could have an 8th-level thief, a 5th-level warrior, plus a 7th-level wizard all rolled up into one?

There's a difference between people who use the rules to create shallow, power-hoarding characters and those who just have many interests in different fields. Luckily, Lilac is a very well-played character who has a lot of personality, which makes it bearable to play with him—but does that really make it right? What I am trying to point out is that no party really needs a specialist in each field, but when you do have them they look poor in comparison to the multiclassed guy who, even if he is not as good, can still do the same things and more.

In closing, I would like to say that while the AD&D game has a glitch every blue moon, it is still a great game. I also hope that this letter has not offended anyone with a multiclassed character. More importantly, I hope that this letter has not offended any of my friends who play multiclassed characters, even though I know that they will probably get me back anyway.

Vincent Nasso
Brooklyn NY

In response to the letter regarding multiclassed characters from Andy Shockney in issue #187, I have compiled several limitations that the DM may place upon such characters to either limit their powers, or better yet, discourage players from choosing them in the first place.

First, enforce all of the *Players Handbook* restrictions. Multiclassed clerics can only use bludgeoning weapons, multiclassed mages may not cast spells in armor, and multiclassed thieves are limited and penalized when using their abilities in armor heavier than leather.

Second, adopt a "ten percent" house rule. Any time a multiclassed character tries to use a special ability of any class, there is a 10% chance that he won't be able to do so. Clerics and mages (regardless of wisdom or intelligence) have a 10% chance of spell failure. For real fun, assign a 75% chance that failed spells backfire on the PCs; after the multiclassed mage hits the party a few times with *magic missiles*, the rest of the group will make the single-class mage do all the spell-casting. Thieving abilities are reduced to 10%. A mage's chance to learn spell is reduced by 10%. Any time an attempt is made to backstab or turn undead, it has a 10% chance of failure (even if the character doesn't fail the roll, he still has to roll an

attack with the backstab or make his turn undead roll).

Third, require high prime requisites in both classes for a character to become multiclassed. I suggest using the dual-class standards here, requiring a 15 or above in one class and a 17 or above in another.

Fourth, double (or triple, for characters with three classes) all training times. Additionally, a teacher of higher level with the same multiclassed combination as the PC and weapon proficiencies, nonweapon proficiencies, and higher specific thief skills than the character may be nearly impossible to find and may charge outrageous rates if he is. A multiclassed PC with 1,000,000 xp whose skills never increase above the first level because he has found no master is pretty useless.

Fifth, cause magical items usable only by a specific class to be less effective or completely ineffective for multiclass characters. The simplest way to handle this is to use the magical item malfunction rules that apply to dwarves against multiclass characters when using class-specific magical items.

Last, remember that NPCs can be multiclassed as well but won't necessarily advertise it. When the PCs finally catch up with the "fighter" they were hired to bring in and he turns out to be a fighter/mage, the shock of getting a *lightning bolt* in the face makes the players wonder if multiclassed characters are such a good idea.

The thing to remember is that characters who are able to juggle as many skills as a multiclassed character is required to are rare. It

takes an exceptional individual to do so, and such individuals should be rare. However, if all else fails, take a blue highlighter to the sections on multiclassed characters in your *Player's Handbook* and declare them an optional rule that you aren't using.

Talus London Young
Asheville NC

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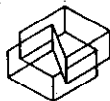
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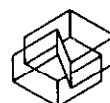


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THE ROLE OF Computers

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Night Trap
(Sega)

You're the night watchman at zombie central

KnightLine

It's not just software that counts when gaming—with PC/MS-DOS games, you also must have quality video and sound boards, as well as the best input/output (I/O) device, to increase the enjoyment of the game you're playing. We checked out some products lately and found a superior sound board and a fantastic I/O device for flight simulation games.

The Sound Galaxy NX Pro sound board from Aztech Systems is fully compatible with AdLib, SoundBlaster Pro II, Disney Sound-Source, and Covox Speech-Thing boards. The NX Pro also features a 20-voice stereo FM Music Synthesizer for producing everything from orchestral sounds to speech. It can also reproduce digitized sounds at a sampling rate of as

much as 44.1KHz, thanks to the board's two 8-bit Digital-to-Analog Converters (DACs). Add in support for Stereo Digitized Audio Recording operations from a stereo microphone, stereo line-in and CD-Audio, and you have an extremely versatile card. You can mix your audio sources for playback, and the board has a built-in AT bus CD-ROM drive interface that allows you to connect an internal or exter-

nal CD-ROM drive without need for an additional card. You can also obtain an optional SCSI CD-ROM drive interface upgrade. With a built-in four-watt amplifier, the board drives a pair of speakers (included) or headphones (also included). As the sound card has MIDI built-in, with an optional MIDI cable, you can tie in any MIDI device for recording and playback needs. A game port for your joy stick is also built into this board. We've been running all our games through the NX Pro and have had difficulty with only one game—SSI's Legends of Valour. The game seems to direct Microsoft Mouse and board IRQs into the same address, so there's conflict and everything crashes!

Aztech Systems wrote two good manuals to help you with not only the board's

Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb

installation but the use of its sound and utility software. When you consider the enormous capabilities of this jack-of-all-needs sound board, it packs real punch for the peso. The only device we've used lately that offers better *music* output is the Roland CML-32 LA Sound Module and LAPC board, with rich MIDI output. We can't think of any better overall sound board for your system than the Sound Galaxy NX Pro board from Aztech. Their international offices are in Fremont, Calif., and their telephone number is (510) 623-8988. Let them know you read about their product in DRAGON® Magazine!

Tired of using a joy stick to obtain realism when engaged with Microsoft's *Flight Simulator* or Dynamix's *Red Baron*? Then switch over to CH Products' *Virtual Pilot*, a super controller that adds new meaning to the realism of flight simulators. This input device is an actual airplane yoke, complete with yaw and pitch controls. Also included (quite conveniently) are buttons for firing weapons on your aircraft. The installation is quite simple—plug it into the joy stick port of your machine and secure the yoke to the edge of your desk. The sense of flying is remarkable. However, we don't recommend *Virtual Pilot* for fast action flying games such as *Falcon*, *Wing Commander*, or *Strike Eagle*—a joy stick seems to be better at handling quick turns and furious action. But if you are looking for a sturdy, well-constructed yoke control for your flight simulators, look no further than *Virtual Pilot*.

So you'll stay "in-the-know," Spectrum HoloByte is going to be releasing a jet fighter simulation from Digital Integration in England called *Tornado*. We've just flown a demo and are pretty impressed! More information when the production version is released.

Strategic Simulations Inc., has initiated a dungeon design contest for purchasers of their *AD&D® Unlimited Adventures: Fantasy Construction Kit* software. Their program enables you to create your own, single-level dungeons. It also includes its own pre-created scenario. Judges from TSR, Inc., America On-line, *Computer Gaming World*, and SSI will select the top six designers. The entries will be judged on their challenge, artwork, and the monsters that populate the dungeon. The grand prize is a trip for two to the 1994 GEN CON® Game Fair held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in August. Three other categories (best monsters, art, and dungeon) will each receive a limited edition TSR Dragon Sculpture, valued at \$300. The contest ends June 30, 1993.

On the packing-their-bags roster for this column, Dynamix has just moved to 1600 Mill Race Drive. Eugene OR 97403.



Night Trap (Sega)

Reviews

Night Trap

Sega, Sega Genesis CD system

Night Trap is an interesting game. If viewed from start to finish as a film, it would be a B-movie complete with stereotypical co-eds, grunts, and zombie-like creatures that plague a house. However, this is not a typical movie—it's a game where your task is to switch between eight different surveillance cameras located in the rooms of the house and catch these creatures with traps set throughout the building. If not enough zombies are trapped, the operations supervisor ends the game. In addition to trapping these creatures of the night, you must also be careful *not* to trap one of the house's occupants. You must listen in on the conversations of the occupants to learn of changes to the access codes that trigger the traps. If you don't change the trap code to its new designation, you won't be able to trap the zombies, and that'll end your game early.

With 1½ hours of video to watch, this game keeps you occupied for quite some time. It's difficult to switch rooms, trap zombies, and listen for access codes when you first play, but after a few losses, you'll find yourself getting the jump on these nasty creatures. The movie itself is quite entertaining—it reminded us of a badly directed horror film, but with better acting. The video is remarkable, with absolutely no frozen frames. The only complaint *we* have with *Night Trap* is due to the limits of the Sega system itself. Only able to display 64 colors simultaneously,

some of the video scenes are dark and hard to decipher. There is also no replay capability.

Otherwise, *Night Trap* is an ingenious game. It's fun watching scenes occur simultaneously in three or four different rooms, noting how the romance between the guests and the suspense of the situation come together. You want to finish the game just to see how the movie ends! *Night Trap* offers a strong entry into the Sega CD game market.

Dungeon Master

FTL Games, PC/MS-DOS

The fantasy role-playing game (FRPG) smash hit of a couple of years ago for Amiga computers has finally been converted for PC/MS-DOS gamers. Has the wait been worth it? We think so. The PC/MS-DOS version of *Dungeon Master* plays identically to the Amiga version. With the speedier processors available on PC/MS-DOS machines, the game also plays faster. The same high quality adventuring (one of the first with the look and feel of enclosed dungeon walls and first-person character perspective) is crisp and sharp with VGA graphics and is as enjoyable now as when we first played the Amiga version. FTL has completed a top-notch conversion and will, undoubtedly, convert thousands of PC/MS-DOS gamers to the thrills of *Dungeon Master*. Included with the game is FTL's Sound Adapter, a hardware peripheral that plugs into your parallel port and offers you digital sound output. Simply plug in a speaker and you have high-quality sound to accompany your game. Although little had been heard

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from FTL for several months, the *Dungeon Master* conversion should bring them to the fore. We reviewed this game using VGA graphics and the Sound Galaxy NX Pro from Aztech Systems.

Empire Deluxe

New World Computing, PC/MS-DOS

Having acquired a taste for the original game a few years ago, the release of *Empire Deluxe* was something we were looking forward to with high expectations. If you thoroughly enjoy strategic war gaming, or you got hooked on *Empire*, you can't go wrong with this latest version. The manual's tutorial gets you into the feel of the strategy needed to battle your various opponents, whether human (by modem, no less) or computer-controlled.

What's new? All kinds of communications support for as many as six simultaneous gamers. You can play by modem or over a network, or try hooking up to your friend's serial port. You can handicap one another so that experts won't annihilate novice players (at least, not right away). The company has even included a new scenario editor that lets you construct your own battlegrounds, new worlds, and new opponents. You can switch between SVGA and VGA graphics modes and also zoom in or out on the action. The digitized sound effects also add more realism to the game.

You start out possessing a city. Through production, you build various armies, navies, and air forces. Your goal is to conquer the entire world. With a point-and-click interface, it's a simple matter to move your units to counter your opponent(s) offensive and defensive moves. What's *not* a simple matter is marshaling your resources correctly. Learning how to defend what you've already gained and how not to stretch your forces too thinly when on the attack can be painful lessons.

We suggest that you construct a simple game plan to conquer your world as you proceed. Have your cities continually produce your most important units, i.e., armies and fighters. Specialize production as you enlarge your territories to take into account what the enemy might be throwing at you—subs can really play havoc with enemy transports.

Empire Deluxe will make a good addition to your PC/MS-DOS software library. Keep in mind your objectives and enjoy a game with enormous replay value.

Road Avenger

Renovation, Sega Genesis CD system

Your girlfriend has been killed by a savage gang of "road warriors." It's up to you to exact your revenge, while stopping the needless violence in the streets. Behind the wheel of your souped-up vehicle, you must run these gangsters off the road through ten stages of white-knuckled action.

The game's controls are similar in style to the classic laser-disc game *Dragon's Lair*. You must push a button or move left or right when you see the corresponding arrow or sign on screen, or hear the correct tone at the advanced level. Failure to make the correct move at the right time results in a view of your untimely demise. The action is extremely fast, the Japanese-style animation is fluid, and the game is a great deal of fun—for a while. The few problems we encountered included the limiting 64-color display that resulted in a grainy view. The game, if played from beginning to end, lasts for approximately half an hour, which lowered its replay value. Once finished, the only reason to play it again would be to impress friends with a look at the adventure's animation.

Finishing the game is another story. We got through the first eight stages in no time, but the difficulty level increased dramatically after the seventh stage. However, with three "continues," we finished the game in one evening. If you enjoyed the *Dragon's Lair* game, or you want to impress your friends with the Sega CD's animation capabilities, then this adventure is for you.

Star Control II

Accolade, PC/MS-DOS

There are few computer entertainments that pack as much dollar-to-play value into their games as does *Star Control II* (SC2) from Accolade. This is an immense science-fiction role-playing game and is an awesome project to have completed. Perhaps the graphics aren't "photorealistic," the animation is minimal, and the sound track and sound effects won't win any awards, but the *scope* of SC2 will leave gamers in awe. Add-in multilinear decision paths, and you've got an adventure that's going to require hundreds of hours to complete. But the best news is that *despite* the game's scope, you'll find yourself engaged in an adventure that is enormously intriguing, fun, and exciting.

The environment is partially based on the company's previous *Star Control* game, set in the Ur-Quan Slave War. Although you need never have played the prequel, if you haven't engaged in space combats in this environment, Accolade has thoughtfully provided a SuperMelee module that allows you to practice space-battle techniques using the vessels you'll encounter in SC2. SuperMelee is highly entertaining and will have you working up a sweat as you combat a broad array of opposition vessels.

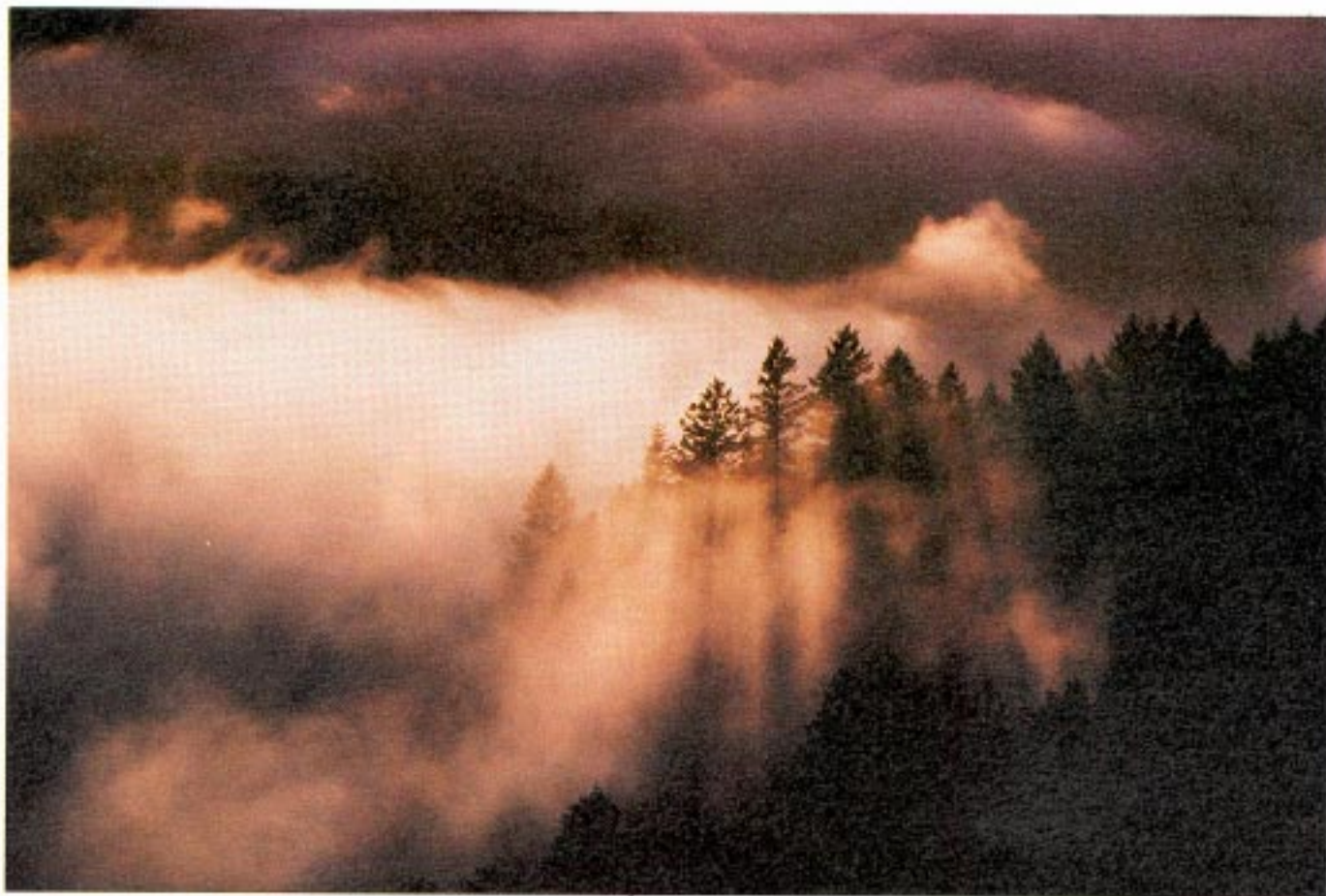
Then it's into SC2 itself. An alien starship based on Precursor technology has been constructed by a squad of robots on Vela II. It is an incomplete starship, as raw materials became depleted. You are given command of the vessel and are to return to Earth to see what you can do to halt the

spread of the Ur-Quan Hierarchy. Through HyperSpace you travel, finally locating Earth and an orbiting Starbase. Unfortunately, a Ur-Quan drone ship also encounters you and speeds away to contact your enemies and inform them of your arrival near Earth. You contact the commander of the Starbase and through a series of interactions learn current technology can improve your starship. All that's required are raw materials. And so begins your galactic expeditions, to locate the materials necessary to beef up your weaponry, expand your crew, increase your fuel capacities, and so on. You're also going to need your own fleet of ships to tackle the Ur-Quan. Thankfully, the Starbase can build much of your needed equipment and can resupply you with crew members, whose ranks become depleted as you hunt for the raw materials you need on various planets.

Early in the game, you'll be informed of the existence of the Melnorme. These intergalactic traders offer critically needed technologies and information. They hang out in the Alpha Centauri system. Everything they possess costs credits, and they have certain informational needs for which they will pay you, such as where the "Rainbow" worlds are located. You're going to find yourself shuttling back and forth from the Sol system to Alpha Centauri as you engage in trade negotiations with the Melnorme.

To locate raw materials, you use your star map. You can zoom in or out on the star systems. By designating a destination, auto-pilot is engaged, and you're on your way through HyperSpace. Hopefully, you won't encounter other aliens enrolled in the early stages of the game, for your starship simply isn't strong or fast enough to avoid destruction! You'll already have found out the combat limits of your craft through engagement with a crippled Ur-Quan craft near the Starbase.

When you arrive in a star system, fly your ship to any of the planets. We found the medium-sized planets contain the most financially rewarding array of raw materials, followed by the planets closest to the sun of that system. When you orbit a planet, you can scan the surface. You can locate minerals, energy, and biological units. Minerals range in quality and character, from common (cyan color) to exotic (purple color). In order to collect the minerals, you must dispatch a lander from your ship to the surface of the planet. Before doing so, though, make certain you investigate the information your initial scan reveals about the planet: orbital radius, temperature, tectonics, weather, atmospheric pressure, mass, radius, gravity, length of day, and axial tilt. You *don't* want to land on planets whose weather or tectonics is above a three classification. All manner of lightning and hot spots can destroy your lander.



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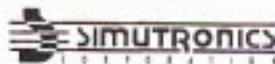
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**100% Organic
Opponents.**

We found it to be most efficacious to save our game directly before attempting a planet landing. As there are 50 save game slots built into the game, you should take advantage of this simple, backup measure. When your lander gets to the planet's surface, you control it as you do your starship and "run over" the minerals. You're informed as to the nature of the mineral. Of course, there are times when the mineral quality and quantity does demand risk. We found that getting the lander as close as possible to the source, grabbing it, and then returning to the ship is a good idea—but you're going to lose crew due to the hostile biologicals or natural forces on the more difficult planets, and they're going to have to be replenished when you return to Earth. Biologicals are also worthy of collection, but they must be stunned first and turned into neat, little "packages" that you can pick up. The Melnorme are especially fond of learning about life forms.

SC2 packs in a variety of star systems. The included map can be a bit overwhelming when you first view it—all stars listed are areas you should probably visit. Take copious notes as to the types of planets, moons, and stars you visit and what you found. You don't want to waste your valuable time by revisiting systems you've already mined.

You're going to be confronted by various space-faring races, each with its own agenda. You're going to have to form alliances, run errands, and battle your enemies to the death. You're going to have a great time playing SC2. The challenges of outfitting your starship and the choices you have to make are fascinating. We've been playing SC2 now for nearly two weeks, at least two hours a day, and we've barely scratched the surface. If you are a SF gamer who enjoys a superb game environment, a high dollar-to-play ratio, and numerous challenges, SC2 is a definite must-have for your software library. We reviewed SC2 using VGA graphics board and Sound Galaxy NX Pro from Aztech Systems.

Who Killed Sam Rupert?

Creative Multimedia Corporation,
Macintosh

This CD-ROM mystery adventure game is as close as we've seen to the real experience of a police detective investigating a homicide. You can select items and information to determine who killed restaurateur Sam Rupert. You've got just six hours to find his killer(s). As you near the end of your time limit, you're going to have to face the media at a press conference, and you'd better know your facts! Your chief is *not* going to be happy if you blow this case.

Who Killed Sam Rupert? (Rupert) brings you to the homicide scene. You must determine what items need to be finger-

printed, sent to the lab for examination, and so on. You interview the leading candidates for the crime, relying on interviews your assistant has recorded with potential witnesses and suspects. You need to learn all you can about their past associations with the victim and their whereabouts on the night of the murder. With an easy-to-use interface, you'll soon be scrambling through the different screens as you gather your facts.

Rupert is a highly realistic investigative environment. No, you don't receive the same jolt as a high-flying flight simulator, nor the sweat-producing encounters found in an FRPG, but it sure is a great deal of fun trying to determine the identity of the murderer! There is quite a sense of accomplishment if you can attain your goal as the detective on this case. Unfortunately, once the case is solved, so is the playability of this CD-ROM. All it's good for from that point on is as a demonstration to your friends as to the capabilities of CD-ROM gaming on your Macintosh. The QuickTime interviews are well acted, the theme and supporting music is quite good, and the story is well-plotted. You might check it out at your retailer and see if your wallet or purse can sustain the financial hit *most* current CD-ROM games require.

Clue corner

Death Knights of Krynn

1. To defeat Lord Soth in the High Clerist's Tower, cast Resist Fire, Bless, Protection from Evil, and all other protective spells. You need to have all characters survive his fireball attack. Secondly, throw spells at him. Most don't affect him, but some do. And last of all, use hand-to-hand combat. Have all your warriors with high HPs and Resist Fire spells attacking him. He has only 59 HP and an AC of 0.

2. In Kalamian's mansion of the Knights, after you identify Ariela, don't try to rest. Just fight it out, then rest and heal. It's fairly easy.

3. In the Dream Merchant's shop in Vingaard, agree to fight the beasts in his dreams. And don't let up with the fighting. Use all your spells, and after a few battles, you get a message of defeat from the dreadwolf. You have finished that trial.

4. In Vingaard, to find Sebas, go to the candle shop early in the day, buy a candle, and go through the other door. Go through all the red doors, ignore any voices, and proceed until you find him.

5. Gargath outpost is easy with high-level cleric PCs who can turn or destroy all the undead within.

6. In Dulcimer, the lich's phylactery is in the center of the dead garden. For XP, wait until you've fought him a few times before you destroy the phylactery. To defeat him, turn his followers and have a Red Robe wizard cast Disintegrate on him.

7. In Cekos beneath the city, sneak past

the guards and cast all your protective spells before the next door. If the dragons get initiative, they will most likely kill your spell-casters with their breath weapons. But if the wizards get initiative, move them back to where they can center a Delayed Blast Fireball in the midst of the blue dragons. One or two of these spells should end all threat to your party. A pair of the spells will kill all the blue dragons.

8. In the Dragon Pit, right after you see Sir Karl and he flees through a door, step up to that door and cast all the protective spells you can, and maybe even Haste, if you find that you need it. The battle in the next corridor is one that you're unlikely to win in the first try. The dreadwolf is a fierce opponent, and totally magic resistant. It is likely that you cannot beat the encounter without one character being killed. It will take at least five attempts to get the best possible solution out of the battle. Rest and heal as completely as possible after the encounter, then continue.

Derek Richardson
Bellaire TX

Might and Magic II

1. Get the secondary skill Cartography right away. It will allow you to automap. To access the map, hit "M." Spell 1-6 (Wizard) does the same thing.

2. Spell locations: Lloyd's Beacon is in Corak's Cave at 7,11; Enchant Item is taught by a master gem maker in the volcano near Vulcania. Make sure you cast Levitation before entering; Encasement and Transmutation spells can be found by exploring the appropriate plane.

3. The best place to find better weapons, equipment, gold, etc., is the Dragon Lair in D1. Serpents are hard, but the real treasure is found behind the Ancient Dragon (+1,000 hit points). Look for many secret doors here.

4. There are two major fountains on Cron. One is just to the west of Atlantium; the other is located in E2 surrounded by trees. As to its powers, there is only one drawback—your characters must be very powerful just to get there, as E2 is the hardest sector in the entire game. The most valuable encounter that I have located is in the Camp of Death in the same sector. (Make sure you get a healthy dose from the fountain first!) One final note on the fountain: rest on it and then check your spell-caster's spell points.

5. Beware of fighting creatures that **aren't affected by any weapon and drain magic** or spell levels. These are often **dead-end encounters**. By the way, **draining spell levels** is only temporary until the next time you rest.

6. Any rejuvenation fountain in Saraken's mine (the skull mountain on the map) will reduce everyone's age to 21. But first, you have to go through Saraken.

7. To get the castle key to enter castles, donate once at every temple (one in each



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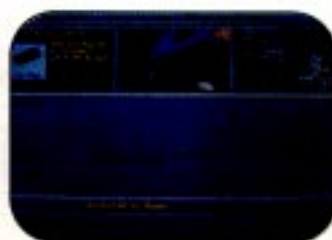
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city). You'll get a Fe Farthing. Take this to the fountain in Middlegate and throw it in. You'll get the key. It also has +5 Thievery when equipped.

8. You'll receive a blessing if you donate continuously at a Temple. The blessing is a sheaf of high-level spells and will disappear next time your characters rest.

9. A Witch Broom and Teleport Orb are necessary objects for well-traveled adventurers. Keep them handy for emergencies.

10. If you battle the Snowbeast in Tundara, don't take the Emerald Ring or you'll be arrested.

11. The Master Thief in the dungeon under Tundara is a hoax and will lower your Thievery scores. The dungeon, however, is a good place to pick up some spare mundane equipment.

12. To find Maro's keys, talk to a large arachnid under Tundara.

13. The quest for clerics to return Corak's soul to his body is the most difficult. Bring your thieves on the others' quests first. You also need an Admit Eight Pass (found after an encounter).

14. At the best of times, your wizard will only be able to cast MegaVolts or Inferno three times before running out of spell points. These spells also eat gems like a trash disposal. Implosion will work on just about every monster.

15. Orc gods have over 30,000 hit points. The fastest way to kill them is with Mass Distortion a couple of times. That should knock them down to two- or three-thousand hit points.

16. The easiest way to survive an Ancient Dragon is to make copies of a Divine Mace and give one to everyone in the party, and just keep trying.

17. The best way to restore dead characters is by fixing them at the temple. It won't age any of your characters, even if it does cost a pretty penny.

18. Always train your characters in Atlantium. You will get better hit points than anywhere else.

19. If you are looking an answer to something, look in dungeons, towns, or castles. It might be posted on a wall somewhere.

Daniel Wilshire
Woodbridge VA

Ultima VII: Forge of Virtue

1. The landing area for your ship is at 52S,125E. You must have a sextant to find this location, or you could be piloting around the island for quite some time trying to find the area described in the adventure's installation and quick-start card.

2. Find Grethian in the NW kitchen area


of the *only* building you can enter after leaving your ship. He has much information to impart regarding Mondain, Minax, Exodus, the Gem of Immortality, and more.

3. There are three statues in the rear room of the building. Each offers you a quest: the left statue is Love, the middle statue is Truth, and the right statue is Courage. You initiate the quest by speaking with the statues.

4. The Truth Quest: Travel south and when you see the first doorway to the west, enter it. Continue walking into quite an expansive room and you'll see bones positioned between four candles. Don't walk through these bones, but make your way around this area to the west and you'll find a hallway. There's a brown hood on the floor. Immediately turn to the north and you'll step through the wall into darkness. If you want to find some gold and wish to fight some critters, wander around for a while. If you want to complete this quest, walk to the east as far as you can. When you find you're not progressing any further, turn north. Eventually you'll come across a room. Open the door by using the switch and grab the locket that's inside. You've found the Talisman of Truth. You'll be teleported back to the Statue of Truth. To make the Black Sword, try talking to the mirror. "Release" and "gem" will do wonders for you. You should also have a sword blank in your hand. Once the forge has been teleported by Erethain, use the water from the well to fill the trough. Perhaps too many chefs might spoil the broth, so tell others to wait. The fire pit needs to heat up the sword blank. Use the hammer and bellows and when the sword blank is extremely hot, put it on the anvil and bang away. Don't expect a masterpiece immediately! The water trough cools the blank. Now talk to the gem in your hand (obtained when the mirror broke) and Bond it to the Black Sword. You should now be able to obtain the Talisman of Courage from Dracothraxus through use of the power of the Black Sword.

The Lessers

Ω



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Role-playing Reviews

Hunting for role-playing pearls

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If you've read any of my earlier review columns, you'll know that I focus my attention on small-press games. The majority of these products tend to be very modest in appearance, quite often amateurish. After all, their producers are new to the business of publication. But they are hardly new to gaming—most of these people are old hands at the hobby and have some real insights into innovative ways of playing; insights exciting enough that these gamers are driven to put them into print. As a result of this gaming expertise but publication nescience, small-press products collectively tend to be like an oyster bed—a little rough on the surface, but bearing some precious pearls within. In other words, they tend to prove true the old saw that “You can't judge a book by its cover.”

Of course, there are exceptions to every rule. Among brand-new producers, there are occasional releases that not only look amateurish but also read and play that way as well. In such cases, the cover is all too indicative of what awaits inside. On the other hand, small presses that survive beyond their first release tend to catch on fairly quickly to how to make their new products look good.

The examples covered below run the spectrum, from the modest looking but wonderful, to the disappointing in both appearance and content, to the nicely polished second edition. The primary focus of this installment is three separate fantasy role-playing games, but also covered in brief are the second edition of a ghostly horror game and a rather unusual set of second edition games released in magazine format.

LEGENDQUEST* game

First Printing: 112-page, ring-bound rulebook
 Board Enterprises Price n/a
 Design: John G. Josten
Chief editor: Jeff DeLance
Cover art: Jodi Pucillo
Interior art: Robert J. Pucillo, John G. Josten, Alain Alajajain, and Damian Daniels

Second Printing: 124-page, perfect-bound rulebook
 Board Enterprises Price n/a
Design: John G. Josten
Editorial assistance: Jeff DeLance, Heather Gulch, Dave Steffek
Front cover: Dan Schwarten
Back cover: Jodi Pucillo
Interior art: Alain Alajajain, Damian Daniels, Jeff DeLance, John G. Josten, Daniel Maheu, Jodi Pucillo, and Robert J. Pucillo

The LEGENDQUEST game is an apt example of the maxim that looks can be deceiving. Physically, the product is relatively unimpressive, particularly in its first printing. But inside the book is a real gem

of a game, one of the best systems I've ever seen, whether compared to amateur or professional producers.

The game's first printing is photocopied black-and-white sheets collected in a three-ring binder; the front cover is a black-and-white sheet slipped into the ring binder's clear front pocket. The text within the book is modestly typeset (using underlining rather than italics, for instance), and it is broken only occasionally by small spot illustrations. In all, this printing strikes the viewer not merely as the product of a small press, but rather of an amateur press—that is to say, as probably the very first product of a group of gaming buddies. The second printing is a bit classier: It's perfect-bound, with a color cover sporting an adequate though less-than-striking painting, and with slightly more polished looking text inside than is the case with the first printing, though with roughly the same density of illustrations. The second printing, then, is a bit more professional in its appearance, though still toward the low end of that spectrum.

Regardless of appearances in either version, however, the game system is quite impressive. Building upon a fairly simple set of basic mechanics, it delivers a surprisingly wide-ranging and flexible yet detailed set of rules within a relatively short number of pages. What's more, the text is well organized and clearly written, with helpful examples in all the needful places. While there are a goodly number of typographical errors, they are not terribly jarring and do not get in the way of learning the system.

Character design in the LEGENDQUEST game is a matter of spending points to purchase what you want. Players each get 250 points to spend. Attributes are Strength, Knowledge, Endurance, Wisdom, Appearance, and Psyche (one improvement of the second printing is that the first printing's SKEWAP anagram is dropped), levels of which are purchased from a table, with varying costs for different character races, and with steadily escalating prices for attribute levels above a race's minimum. For example, a halfling would pay 8 points for an Agility rating of 7, 16 points for a rating of 8, or 32 for a rating of 9. By contrast, a dwarf would pay 256 points for an Agility rating of 7 or 512 for a rating of 8; an Agility of 9 is unavailable to dwarves.

After purchasing Attributes, players buy skills for their characters, again using a chart. This time the cost is a simple multiplier per level bought, based upon the difficulty of the skill. For instance, the blind-fighting skill (fighting in the dark) costs 9 points per level, while barbering costs only 3 points per level. Many skills fall together within a group—such as various sword skills—and sometimes groups fall together into a “genre”—such as sword, axe, spear, etc., making up an

overall melee genre.

Next, players note how much damage their characters can sustain, a figure termed “Life's Blood” in the LEGENDQUEST game, and how much fatigue they can stand. Life's Blood equals six times a character's Endurance, fatigue six times Willpower. The formulas for movement rates are nearly as simple, and the second printing contains a well-designed character sheet with the most important formulas built into it for easy reference.

Finally, players spend any remaining character-creation points to determine their characters' beginning money, with which they purchase equipment. The game contains a pretty standard list of items, from basic clothing to major weapons, complete enough to serve as a touchstone for later purchases as a campaign progresses. Rather than detail encumbrance rules for all this, the game focuses on the initiative, movement, and fatigue effects of armor and weapons, and leaves to GMs and common sense the encumbering effects of other equipment.

Accomplishing actions in the game involves determining a percentage chance of success, based upon a skill and its related attribute. The attribute is multiplied by 10 for a base percentage, and each level of skill raises this by five percent. If the skill belongs to a skill group or a genre, five times the level of that group or genre is added to the percentage chance as well. (In terms of character design, this setup allows quite a bit of flexibility, resulting in some characters who are masters of a particular weapon, and other characters who are merely familiar with a broad range of them.) This skill-use system is expressed as a simple equation, with variations for dealing with resisted skill attempts (like striking a dodging foe, which subtracts the foe's dodge rating from the chance of success, or lifting a heavy rock, which applies a negative modifier to the attempt), assisted attempts (such as multiple mages working together to cast an enhanced spell, in which case each participant contributes a positive modifier to the equation), and competitive attempts (such as arm wrestling, in which case competitors each add a die roll to his skill percentage, and high total wins). A few other special modifiers are mentioned, such as doubling the skill rating when taking one's time to do something right, but there aren't many necessary, as the basic equations explained above cover pretty much any occasion.

It is worth noting, however, that in some cases characters can devote less than their full skill ratings to a particular task, so as to hold something back. A mage with multiple skill levels in a particular spell, for example, may choose to cast the spell at less than maximum effect, so as to limit the fatiguing effects of magic use. Similarly, a character in melee combat might choose to attack at less than full skill, for

instance, in order to devote the unused skill levels to parry attempts for that combat turn, or (if the Dual-Weapon skill is possessed) to devote them to a second weapon held in the off hand. This flexibility of skill use allows for considerable tactical variation in combat.

The movement rules do so as well. Movement rates are divided into four categories—free movement, walking, running, and sprinting—with Agility and Endurance determining the distances a particular character can travel at each rate, modified by any Running skill possessed. Free movement represents the few steps that a character can make almost unconsciously and still be able to accomplish something that takes great concentration, such as casting a spell or firing a ranged weapon. Walking is normal melee movement. Running and sprinting are charging movements, with the latter being a sort of “damn-the-torpedoes” approach that makes the charger more vulnerable to attacks by the target of the charge. Also included in this section of the book are rules for pressing forward in an attack, breaking off from melee, and firing ranged weapons into melees.

Defensive options in combat include parrying (which allows the defender to attack), dodging (which precludes the defender from performing any other actions), fending (swinging a weapon wildly about, to keep opponents at bay), and—of course—the wearing of armor and shields. Shields make a target harder to hit, especially if the target is skilled in their use; armor absorbs damage, though it becomes damaged itself in the process.

Finally, there are simple rules for special combat situations such as fighting in the dark, attempting to disarm opponents, fighting from horseback, damage to an attacker from brawling attacks on an armored foe, damage bonuses and penalties for having strength greater or less than needed for a particular weapon, and the like. And significantly, characters suffer fatigue in combat, resulting in increasingly devastating initiative and combat penalties, all of which are kept track of fairly easily on the character sheet.

As mentioned earlier, magic use follows this same simple-but-flexible plan. First, a player purchases basic skill in a particular “genre” of magic: Conjuring, Druid, Healer, Illusion, Necromancer, Sorcery, or Bard. Then individual spells are bought as separate skills within that group. Finally, additional Control Levels can be purchased for each particular spell. If the spell is cast at its basic level, a listed minimum effect, range, and area are given. But a spell-caster with multiple Control Levels in the spell can choose to devote one or more to extending the range, area, or effect. In other words, spells are highly flexible for casters with multiple levels of skill with them. The price for using multiple Control Levels, however, is that the

fatigue cost for casting the spell increases. (In the LEGENDQUEST game, characters do not forget spells when they cast them; rather they suffer fatigue from casting the spells, and in maintaining them beyond their listed basic duration.) Rules are also included for magical environments and items that can enhance or diminish a spell’s effects, and steel worn decreases a mage’s ability to manipulate magical power. Additionally, a target’s Psyche rating yields a negative modifier to a caster’s chance of success, at the rate of 5% per point of Psyche. And as mentioned earlier, mages who know the same spell can cooperate in casting an enhanced version, or they can use their skill to oppose and diminish a casting. In all, this is a quite impressive magical system. As a specific example of how well it builds upon the basic game mechanics, the Sleep spell is not an all-or-nothing proposition, instead it adds fatigue to its target, increasing the initiative and skill penalties mentioned above, until finally the target is rendered incapable of action (i.e., falls asleep). Of course, if the target is naturally weak enough, or the mage sufficiently powerful, the spell could still result in sleep within one round of action.

But as if the skill, combat, and magic systems covered so far weren’t enough, the LEGENDQUEST game also includes rules for mentalism. Basically, this is another spell-like area of expertise, but drawing power directly from the mind and not subject to the normal magical rules for steel penalties, vagaries of magical power in the local environment, cooperative or opposed “casting,” etc. As a consequence, while this section bears mechanical similarities to the game process of spell-casting, mentalism comes across with a very different flavor from that of magic use.

The game contains a fairly extensive list of creatures for use in a fantasy world, covering all the necessary bases without being needlessly derivative of earlier games, nor being outlandish merely for difference’s sake. In other words, GMs will find here everything they need for encounters with the sorts of mythical creatures fantasy players have come to expect, plus a number of interesting creatures unique to the LEGENDQUEST game, but believable in their own right. Also, there is a nice range of difficulties here; creatures included run the gamut from relative pushovers to the truly monstrous.

This isn’t to say, however, that the LEGENDQUEST game is perfect. For one thing, because the game packs so much into a relatively few pages, and because it focuses on game systems without really presenting a fantasy world of its own, its text tends to be a bit “dry” and lawyerly. For use as a framework by which to present your own fantasy world, the game can serve well, but it gives very little advice to novice GMs, and leaves to them

completely the burden of creating a world, designing adventures, and even assigning exact values for encounters with any particular creature (all the creature stats are listed as a range of numbers from which to choose). For another thing, the math can be a bit tedious, even for those quick with addition. This is especially the case with initiative rolls, though keeping track of fatigue effects, armor depletion, the varying initiative and fatigue effects of different weapons, and modifiers for “adventurers” versus “combatants” versus “non-combatants” versus adventurers who have “lost their edge” through inactivity, just to name a few things, can be troublesome. The appendices make things a bit easier by gathering the most important tables and formulas together for quick reference, particularly in the second printing, and the character sheet in the second printing provides spaces for noting commonly used numbers, but in my opinion, the game could be much improved by changing the d100 system to a d20 system, making all the math *much* easier. After all, the majority of the game’s multipliers and modifiers are in multiples of five, which reduces to one in a d20 system. Damage rolls are also something of a problem, in that a character always rolls 1d10 for damage, then multiplies the result by a weapon multiplier ranging from 1/3 for a knife to 7 basic for a trebuchet. Trying to quickly calculate 1 1/3 of 7, or 1/3 of 5, in the middle of combat certainly isn’t impossible, but it makes most players stumble for a second, which detracts from the action. The multiplier system also makes progressively larger weapons have significantly larger *ranges* of damages, so that a maul might do a piddly two points of damage one round and an incredible 25 the next, while a knife ranges only from one to three. And while the effects of piercing damage are clear (armor counts as only half its value versus piercing damage), neither printing of the game adequately explains the difference between blunt damage and normal damage.

Those complaints notwithstanding, the LEGENDQUEST game is an admirable product. Gamers who like full control in designing their characters from scratch, and those who like combat systems that are tactical without burying themselves in minutiae, should find it well to their liking, as long as they don’t mind dealing with a fair amount of double-digit addition. People who like wide-ranging, flexible magic systems will be pleased with the game as well.

You probably won’t find a copy of the LEGENDQUEST game in your local hobby shop, but those interested can write to:

Board Enterprises
P.O. Box 174
Chicago IL 60635

MONSTERS & SLAYERS* game

120-page rulebook

Atlantis Enterprises

\$14.95

Design: Clifford Raymond Fagan

Cover: Tom Fee Graphic Design

Interior art: Not credited

If the game previously reviewed proves the “book and cover” proverb, the MONSTERS & SLAYERS game certainly serves as the rule’s exception.

Consider, first of all, the game’s front cover. It bears a logo so intricately scrolled as to be virtually illegible (requiring a reader to turn to the back cover just to learn the name of the game). Below this logo, the rest of the front cover consists of a colorful, high-fantasy type of painting. There are dragons, boarmen, a cyclops, and a giant spider all gathered around a cliff, converging on a pair of warriors (a male in chain mail and a green-skinned female in pieces of bronze) who are rescuing a diaphanously clad woman tied to a post. There is also a dwarfish warrior seated backward on the main dragon’s tail (while the dragon is flying!), hacking a hole in it, through which steam escapes. The proportions of the captive woman, the pose of the man in chain mail (lunging toward the dragon with abandon, oblivious to the fact his next step will carry him over the cliff), the fact that his sword is four times the size of its scabbard, the dwarf’s dainty perch on the flying dragon’s tail, and the sheer number of monsters present, all point to wild fantasy.

But according to the back-cover text, the game is devoted to realism (“without burying you in charts”). It is set in a sixth-century Arthurian Britain, but one in which mythic monsters and “Faerie” races actually exist. There is a certain fantastic historicity to the tone of this material. The text also reveals, however, that player characters are all members of an elite Slayers Guild (a more fantasy Renaissance concept, not in keeping with the sixth-century Arthurian theme). Trained as fighters, mages, *and* assassins, the PCs work as mercenaries, apparently taking contracts largely to help Arthur stabilize the land.

As a set, then, the front and back cover serve to give a pretty good idea of the jumble that’s inside the book.

The text inside is not terribly written; there is a certain straightforward charm to it at the most basic level, as if a friend were explaining the game to you. But there are a number of punctuation errors and minor grammatical construction problems that make me wince at the flyleaf’s advertisement of the producer’s availability for other editorial work. And, unfortunately, the book also suffers from clumsy organization. For example, an explanation of the game’s monetary system comes near the beginning of the book, before character creation. And the

character-creation section is immediately followed by a fairly detailed combat chapter, before the skills section of the character sheet is explained. Worse, the character-creation chapter does not tell how to calculate a PC’s hit points! That secret isn’t revealed until six chapters later—the “Notes to Referee” chapter—and under the “Non-Player Characters” heading! As a result of all this, the book is rather difficult to reference during play.

References to Arthur drop out fairly early in the game, as well, with any world description taking on a progressively more fantastic tone and culminating in a sort of trite silliness by the book’s end. That is to say, given that the product posits itself as a serious role-playing game with strong historically mythic overtones, it is difficult to accept that its sample adventure takes place in dwarven copper mines within a semi-active volcano in Wales(!), with caverns full of such creatures as Aqualung the boarman chieftain, Bendover the hobgoblin necromancer, Orfa Nanny the female “Leaping Lizard” shaman, and Hazel the housekeeper turned barrow wight, just to name a few. But what can you expect when the local king’s name is Lumpy the Third, and the border town where your PC begins has a restaurant named Alice’s—where you can get anything you want, except Alice? These are only a few of many, many examples.

The book’s artwork has its problems, too. The maps are as far from professional as is possible, being smudgy photocopies of hand-drawn and hand-lettered originals. The illustrations are largely compilations of clip art that, while often interesting in a bizarre sort of way, have little or nothing to do with the text. For example, the adventure section is set off from the rest of the book by a full-page illustration consisting of mirrored halves in which twins somewhat resembling Ed Grimley stand on a sea, holding aloft a giant pocketwatch, while a pair of misty women on cloud-like unicorns float in the sky above a pair of King Kong-sized eagle heads projecting out of the water. Eighteen pages earlier, a woman wearing nothing but an Egyptian headdress on her head and a peacock tail on her behind stands hip-deep in another ocean, beneath a humongous moon, watching a snake. What is most remarkable about her, however, is that her peacock tail still has the bird’s head attached, which looks as if it is projecting out of her fanny. The overall effect is sort of mystical (at least until the peacock head becomes evident) but is very strange in a game of 6th-century, Arthurian England. Those two are the best pieces of art. The worst pieces are literally pasted together, with scissor marks quite evident. And at least two of them contain images apparently taken from copyrighted paintings by a world-renowned artist. The word “litigious” springs to mind.

This is not to say that the game is entirely bad, however. Admittedly, because it is fairly short and character generation is simple, players can get into it rather quickly, especially considering that the “everyone’s a Slayer” premise gives an immediate focus for adventures. And basic dice mechanics work pretty well. The skill system uses 2d6 to 4d6 versus a 3-18 attribute rating, and damage is done as multiple d6s, with any exceptionally good combat rolls yielding bonus dice to an attack. Also, the sample PC races are somewhat interesting: Elves are the descendants of human-dryad relations (the green-skinned woman on the cover is an elf), and gnomes are the descendants of human-kobold (earth elemental) relations (the “dwarf” on the cover is actually a gnome). But in most small-press games, no matter how amateur, I can normally find at least one truly shining spot that makes them worth taking a look at, at least for a particular audience. Unfortunately, there just isn’t enough unusual or well-done about the MONSTERS & SLAYERS game to warrant my recommending it to anyone. For new players, the game is too bare, leaving too much work to the GM, and it is too difficult to reference. For veteran players, it is too trite and hackneyed, offering nothing new.

LEGENDARY LIVES* game

96-page Player’s Primer

Marquee Press

\$11.95

Design: Joe Williams & Kathleen Williams

Cover: Wayne Henke

Interior art: Wayne Henke, Kathleen Williams, & Erik Weimer

100-page Referee’s Rulebook \$11.95

Design: Joe Williams & Kathleen Williams

Cover: Not specifically credited

Interior art: *Picture Book of Devils, Demons and Witchcraft* (Ernst & Johanna Lehner), *Pictorial Archive of Decorative Renaissance Woodcuts* (Jost Amman), & *Treasury of Fantastic and Mythological Creatures* (Richard Huber)

72-page Societies Sourcebook \$12.95

Design: Joe Williams & Kathleen Williams

Art: Wayne Henke, Kathleen Williams, & Erik Weimer

The LEGENDARY LIVES game was produced by the same designers who produced the LOST SOULS* game (see the review in DRAGON® Magazine issue #186 and the “Short and Sweet” section of this review column). The general system of the LOST SOULS game and many of its ghostly powers found their origins in the LEGENDARY LIVES game.

In terms of the “book and cover” aphorism central to this column, the LEGENDARY LIVES books fall into the category of amateur appearance but impressive content. The amateur appearance is

most true of the first two books, less so of the third, which was released later and has a somewhat more polished looking cover and interior layout. But all three of the books are “friendly” to the eye, with large, airy text salted with numerous line drawings.

Technically, only the Player’s Primer and Referee’s Rulebook are necessary for play of the LEGENDARY LIVES game; the Societies Sourcebook is advertised as usable with any fantasy system. But while the first two books together present a quite complete rules system, it is within the third book that the fantasy world in which the system is set becomes clearest. And considering how much effect that world has on the shape of the system itself, it seems to me most advantageous to discuss the three together.

The LEGENDARY LIVES game constitutes a fresh look at role-playing, reflecting a fantasy world that, while it is strongly rooted in European legend, differs considerably from the normal gaming approach to those legends, and having game mechanics that are far different from the norm.

Specifically, while most fantasy games follow a fairly Tolkienesque division of major PC races into human, elf, and dwarf, with orc and goblin as the primary evil races, and a few games establish their separateness by inventing totally new major races; the LEGENDARY LIVES Player’s Primer provides 26 different major races for PCs, the majority being creatures of European fairie legend, with others representing the sorts of races players might encounter in a wide range of popular fantasy novels. Each race has a unique power listed for it, something similar to a magical spell that can be used a limited number of times per day. (PCs are further distinguished by “type”—roughly translatable to occupation—with 12 spell-caster and 19 nonspell-caster types, with family background and randomly generated histories adding even a bit more variety.) As another example, the Referee’s Rulebook devotes several of its pages to a cataloging of special plants and their wondrous uses; even beginning PCs are familiar with at least a few of them. And the sample adventure in the Referee’s Rulebook, as well as the sample world description in the Societies Sourcebook, reveals a worldview that focuses upon the creatures of fairie (with other fantasy cultures sort of hanging about the edges).

As to the unusual nature of the game mechanics, this is most evident in the fact almost every situation can be resolved by a single die roll, typically by the players rather than the GM. Each PC sheet carries an Action Results Table (referred to as the ART), on which a percentile dice roll is referenced with the applicable skill rating to determine what degree of success—divided into columns—the PC has achieved. The ten possible column results

range from worst to best as follows: Catastrophic, Pathetic, Feeble, Inferior, Poor, Passable, Good, Great, Superior, and Awesome. The difficulty of any situation a PC might face is expressed as one of these adjectives. As examples from the Player’s Primer, to climb a cliff a PC might need a Good roll, or an arm-wrestling opponent might have a Strength rating of Passable, requiring the PC to equal or exceed that rating in order to win the competition. Often, the game mechanics dictate which results beyond the minimum necessary yield enhanced success, such as causing additional damage to foes in combat, and results below the minimum yield progressively more deleterious penalties, like determining the number of times the PC is hit by foes in combat. Even when the mechanics do not specify varying results, however, it is assumed that the GM and players will translate into story effect the column rolled. Note that the GM does not usually roll dice in this game, even in combat! In general, the players each make a single roll to see whether their PCs hit their foe or are hit by their foe. If a foe is hit, the damage done is a number of points equal to the number of columns achieved above the foe’s combat rating (larger weapons add to a PC’s effective skill, thereby tending to yield higher columns of damage). If a PC is hit, a roll is made for hit location, and the player rolls that location’s defense value (possibly modified by armor at that location), trying to achieve a column higher than the foe’s damage rating. Results under the foe’s rating yield damage to PCs not in points, but rather in terms of a light, medium, heavy, critical, or deadly wound (PCs do not have hit points).

As the ART mechanic reveals, this game system stresses quick play and storytelling over realism. For that reason, combat distances are divided into our abstract ranges: melee, thrown missile, and “too far away,” and turns are of an abstract length. Also, while there are quick rules (roughly a paragraph each) for combat considerations such as grappling, disarming, subdual, pushing back opponents, unarmed damage, falling, fire, and the like, and even a good set of mass-combat rules, they work more as dramatic storytelling elements rather than the more usual sort of tactical choreography common to most games. In other words, the game works well for visualization of dramatic details but virtually defies the use of miniatures on a grid map.

One potential problem with this approach—though it is hardly a fault—is that readers familiar with other games may find themselves a bit “adrift at sea” when first confronted with such abstraction. Many will find themselves looking for damage dice ratings for the weapons, for instance, or wondering how far a foe can run in a turn. Similarly, it takes a bit of time to develop a reasonable vision of the

world the designers build from, and because of the PC races assumed, the game isn’t necessarily adaptable to a wide range of other fantasy worlds.

As more serious complaints: 1) Even the toughest of foes seem somewhat wimpy (in my group’s play, four beginning characters killed a “mighty” dragon, without any special preparation, and without losing any of their lives—though one was seriously injured); 2) Roughly a quarter of the character art in the Player’s Primer is clearly slightly modified tracings from the *Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe*; and 3) the sample adventure is less than clear and overly linear (leading the PCs about “by the nose”). Also, some people are sure to find the game’s magic system less than satisfactory, in that there are relatively few spells (a spell-casting PC begins play with only one spell known, and each school contains only 12 total), even though each can be cast several times per day, until the PC runs out of magical power for that day.

But overall, the strengths of the LEGENDARY LIVES game far outweigh any weaknesses. Because its PC creation system is so entertaining, and its play is so fast in general, it makes a great “change-of-pace” game. Also, the world it presents is an engaging one (especially with the history, politics, and PC-specific, miracle-delivering religions of the Societies Sourcebook), capable of handling a wide range of adventure types and standing up to sustained play.

Short & sweet

LOST SOULS game, 2nd ed.*, by Joe Williams and Kathleen Williams. Sage Lore Productions, \$19.95. DRAGON® Magazine #186 carried my in-depth review of the first edition of the LOST SOULS game. The second edition adds a great deal of new material (60% new, by the designers’ calculation), while retaining all the charm of the original. In the LOST SOULS game, players take the roles of the ghosts of people who have died before their time and must haunt the physical world in order to take care of unfinished business. Besides having followed different professions during life, PCs are distinguished by ghost type, with 22 different types available, each with its own distinctive powers and outlook on the afterlife.

The second edition improves upon the first in multiple ways. For one thing, it bears a much more professional-looking, perfect-bound, color cover. The material inside is also more polished in this edition, with PC creation being a bit more variable. PCs begin the game with varying amounts of karma, for example, rather than everyone starting with one point as in the original game, and appearance is no longer entirely dictated by ghost type. Also, the book is liberally seasoned with

Continued on page 75

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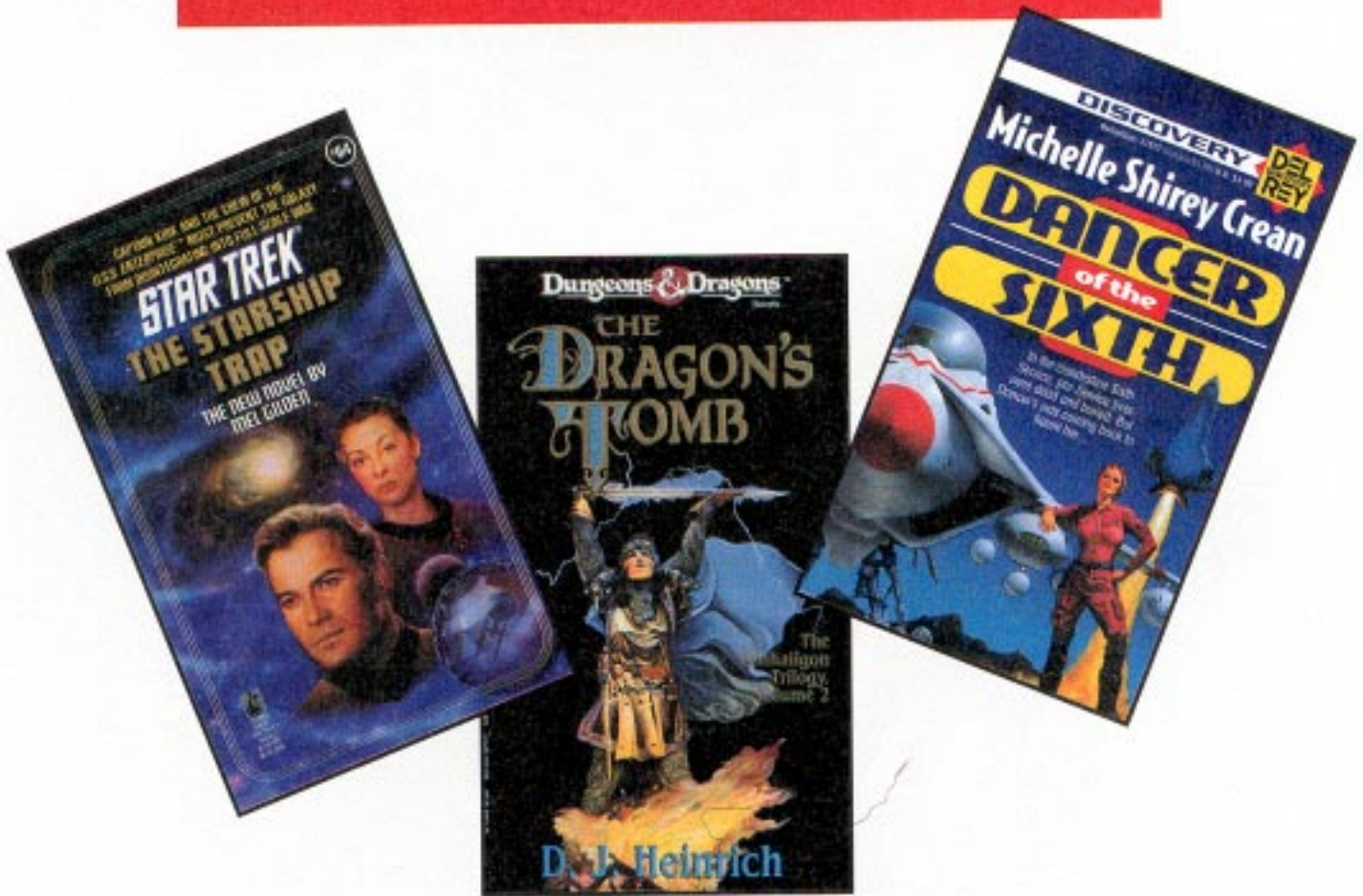
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The ROLE of Books



When a boggart's unhappy, everyone's unhappy

©1993 by John C. Bunnell

THE BOGGART

Susan cooper

McElderry 0-689-50576- \$14.95

You're a curmudgeonly sprite who lives in old castles and plays mild practical jokes on the humans in residence unless you're rewarded with a daily bowl of cream by the back step. Then one day you go to sleep in a desk drawer; when you wake up, "home" has become a strange place full of peculiar devices, far too many

people, and scarcely a memory of even the possibility that magic is real.

That's the premise of this lively new novel from Susan Cooper, in which modern Toronto plays unwitting host to a creature of wild magic whose powers unleash more danger and wonder than even the Boggart is usually prepared to handle. Brought accidentally to Canada from the Scottish castle that Emily and Jessup Volnik's father has recently inher-

ited, the Boggart finds that no one appreciates his pranks and that there are both rewards and hazards in the strange force called "electricity" that is the lifeblood of his new surroundings.

Cooper does a truly inspired job of getting into the Boggart's head, balancing wonder, fear, and amusement in its boggarty imagination as it tests the boundaries of its new home, savoring pizza and tinkering with traffic lights. Likewise,

Emily and Jessup are thoroughly convincing as they eventually come to terms with the growing chaos and figure out just what's causing it. What's more, Cooper's adults are just as believable, from the annoying parapsychologist who wants to test Emily for psychic powers to the elderly theater-folk who are first to recognize the Boggart for what it is.

The result is a remarkably seamless yarn that balances moments of wicked good humor, unexpected danger, and sheer mythic power in a story that captures both the essence of old magic and the everyday bustle of its modern setting. Nor does it compromise on the climax, an ingenious fusion of spell and software that stretches both humans and Boggart on its way to a satisfying, plausible conclusion.

Susan Cooper is already well-known for her award-winning *Dark is Rising* Arthurian fantasy cycle, rightly considered a classic of its kind. *The Boggart* is a story of a different order but no less wondrous, and it's all the more welcome for being Cooper's first new novel in quite some time. It's a novel not to be missed, and readers should hope Cooper's next tale isn't so long in coming.

BURNING BRIGHT

Melissa Scott

Tor 0-312-85502-8 \$21.95

There are two thoughtful, intriguing stories in *Burning Bright*: a tightly conceived tale of smuggling, diplomacy, and betrayal on an interstellar scale, and a clever story about what role-playing games may be like a few centuries from now. There's just one problem: While Melissa Scott does an admirable job of weaving the two plots together, only one of them really belongs in the future world in which she places the book.

Burning Bright is a world strategically located between human and alien empires, and Scott builds a compelling if lightly sketched web of intrigues around lively legal and illegal commerce between the two cultures, overseen by assorted politicians and wealthy trading interests. On the fringes of this activity is one Illario Ransome, a computer-artist and sometime spy once famous as a designer of virtual-reality game scenarios. It seems at first to be coincidence that someone wants him back in the Game and out of the data-underground at the same time that a talented new Gamesmistress is visiting the planet. Before long, however, Ransome and Quinn Lioe find that neither the Game nor real life are without their dangers.

Scott's extrapolation of present-day role-playing forms into the high-tech realm of virtual reality does well both by the hardware and the social dynamics of gaming. Unlike authors who've imagined vast computer-refereed game worlds in which players function mostly as individuals, she portrays gaming as a social and creative

activity in which groups of players interact with a human mastermind. The sophisticated hardware and technical wizardry Scott postulates is there to support that interplay, not to take its place.

What fails to persuade is Scott's vaguely asserted premise that her Game—indeed, the one true meta-Game played throughout the interstellar community—is based entirely in one enormous milieu whose status quo can't be tampered with by individual designers and players. This is the equivalent of somehow legislating that all current fantasy gamers everywhere will use TSR's AD&D® rules system and the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting; it simply isn't believable. Nothing about the Game hardware or the otherwise free-wheeling galactic culture in which the book is set is sufficiently unique to make that sort of creative monopoly remotely plausible. Yet Scott relies on that vision of the Game and the artistic stagnation it implies to drive a significant portion of her plot.

The contradictory world-building, though, is very nearly offset by Scott's skillful characterization. Lioe and Ransome are engaging personalities, intelligent but fallible and easy for readers to like. Their developing agendas, their differing perceptions of the Game, and their reactions as events tangle them in situations beyond their control are all well-drawn and approachable, thoughtful without being dogmatic. But there's no real force behind the supposed unthinkability of changing the Game, and that badly undercuts the power of the story Scott tells.

While *Burning Bright* may be severely flawed from a literary perspective, there's also much in the novel that's worth admiring. Certain implausible elements aside, Melissa Scott's image of the future of gaming is strikingly perceptive, and those with an interest in wedding role-playing to tomorrow's technology will find much of value in the book's pages.

DANCER OF THE SIXTH

Michelle Shirey Crean

Del Rey 0-345-37912-8 \$3.99

If double identities, convoluted plot twists, and mysterious aliens were enough to guarantee a successful space adventure, *Dancer of the Sixth* would be just that. Unfortunately, in the case of Michelle Shirey Crean's first novel, the cleverness serves mostly to distract attention from the book's several serious weaknesses.

The first problem is one of pure structure. Roughly the second quarter of the book consists of a long flashback sequence in which we learn the background of former crack starpilot Auglaize DeWellesthar, now known as the intelligent operative Dancer of the mysterious "Sixth Service." We get the material in flashback for two reasons: because

Dancer is only just relearning it herself, bypassing an artificially planted memory-block, and because Crean is building suspense for a plot involving Dancer's resumption of her prior identity in order to penetrate a devious alien invasion scheme.

The trouble with this is that the alien-invasion business is really secondary to the novel's focus, which is squarely on Dancer and her incredibly fierce will to survive against all opposition. There's a lot of important and skillfully done character development in the flashback—but because it *is* a flashback, its emotional impact is muted in favor of the action/adventure story, giving the novel a schizophrenic air.

At the same time, Crean's use of memory blocks as a plot device raises uncomfortable questions about her aliens. On one hand, the "evil" Karranganthians are portrayed as brutal villains and masters of physical torture. Yet the sympathetically drawn Auryx manipulate memories and minds with casual subtlety, and though their intentions are supposedly the best, it's hard not to see their intrusions as just as cruel and invasive as those of their enemies. Crean's portrayal of the Auryx raises powerful questions about ethics and their application to espionage—but leaves them mostly unanswered. That gives the conflict between Auryx and Karranganthian interests a flat quality, with little beyond propaganda on which to judge each race's complaints.

Crean also has trouble with her ending, which solidly resolves Dancer's personal problems but leaves a key Karranganthian prisoner much too casually guarded. Here again, the mixed focus hurts the book's credibility. If this is meant to be a stand-alone novel with Dancer at its center, Davenger's vague status is a serious loose end. If it's supposed to be the first in a space-war series, there's far too little context established in this opening book.

Dancer of the Sixth simply tries to be too many things at once, and it fails at all of them. It's not that Crean writes badly; her pure wordcraft is crisp and competent. But both she and her readers would have been better served had a tighter rein been kept on those talents in the pages of this novel.

THE DRAGON'S TOMB

D. J. Heinrich

TSR 1-56076-592-5 \$4.95

If one judges game-inspired fantasy novels by the degree to which they reproduce the unique aspects of the game worlds from which they're drawn, *The Dragon's Tomb* gets high marks. That sort of detail, though, isn't the only reason to be impressed with D. J. Heinrich's second Penhaligon novel; a thoughtfully balanced plot and unusually sensitive characterization are equally strong attractions.

Heinrich does more than simply set the region called Penhaligon down in a corner of the D&D® game's Known World. We learn early in this novel that the shadowy Immortals and the subtle pursuit of Immortality perhaps the D&D game's single most distinctive design feature, are a key element in the trilogy's overall structure. What's more, Heinrich is one of the first writers in either the D&D or AD&D universes to seriously consider the implications of a world where resurrection-magic is a (pardon the expression) fact of life.

We also get a perceptive look at monster psychology. The machinations and battle-tactics of the deadly green dragon Verdilith make him an exceptionally dangerous foe, with all the subtlety, craftiness, and fighting ability that are too often ignored in portraying dragonkind. The complex history Heinrich develops for the abelaat species makes these monsters both horrific and tragic creatures, with a distinctively alien agenda that lends extra dimension to the novel.

The book's plot neatly combines an epic struggle with an intensely personal quest. On one hand, if the menace posed by a weird spell-draining box isn't countered, all Mystara will be permanently drained of magic by the power-seeking abelaats. But the focus of the tale is squarely on young Johauna Menhir, a would-be knight who is struggling to cope with the loss of her beloved mentor, Flinn. Heinrich makes Johauna convincingly desperate and unpredictable in the wake of her loss, and thus more mistake-prone than the average heroine.

As a result, there's a somewhat unsettling dark quality to *The Dragon's Tomb* that makes it less comfortable reading than the usual fantasy adventure. But if the aura of looming disaster sometimes seems laid on just a little heavily, it's there in a good cause, and the Penhaligon books definitely make a promising introduction to the literary side of the D&D world.

THE STARSHIP TRAP

Mel Gilden

Pocket 0-671-79324-1 \$5.50

The good news about *The Starship Trap* is that it continues an agreeable trend in Star Trek novels toward genuinely intriguing science-fiction concepts, and makes a largely successful effort to give its guest-starring characters more dimension than the usual round of villains and bureaucrats. The bad news is that the clever ideas and lively characters are wrapped in strikingly awkward prose that puts entirely too much distance between the reader and the story.

The opening scene aptly illustrates the difficulty: "[Captain Kirk] took a sip of the food replicator memory bank version of coffee and watched the two men who sat

near him—Mr. Spock (his Vulcan first name was unpronounceable by humans) and Dr. Leonard McCoy."

And, two pages later:

"Spock was long past being offended by anything McCoy said, but he sometimes allowed himself to be baited for the entertainment value of the discussion."

Author Mel Gilden's narrative makes the highly unlikely assumption that readers have never before met the familiar Star Trek characters, when they've probably known for years that Spock's first name is unpronounceable and are well-acquainted with Spock's and McCoy's perennial battle of snappy comebacks. Gilden's three pages of opening text could easily have been tightened into a short log entry and a page of repartee without losing any crucial detail.

The second difficulty lies in Gilden's choice of viewpoints, which allows him to be in every character's head at once (both Kirk's and Spock's, for instance, in that opening sequence). This has two frustrating consequences: it means that a lot of emotional cues are narrated rather than developed through action and interaction, and it makes for character relationships that are more annoying than suspenseful. We know too much about Federation politico Conrad Franklin Kent and his aide, Hazel Payton, to dismiss them as cardboard bureaucrats—and so it's irritating when Captain Kirk perennially does just that, or when Gilden keeps some bit of information away from the reader that Kent and Payton have known all along.

Impressively, though, Gilden's inventive plot comes close to compensating for the uneven narration. The mystery-weapon known only as the Aleph is a positively fascinating invention, and the scientific puzzle it offers is a welcome break from the usual round of space amoebae, godlike aliens, and planetary dictators common to Star Trek adventures. Kent and Payton provide an equally pleasant contrast to a recent stream of corrupt or inept admirals and other visiting Starfleet personnel. Yet neither story element dominates the tale to the extent of weakening it as space adventure.

On balance, it's hard to recommend *The Starship Trap*; the writing is just too rough around the edges to make for pleasant reading, especially in as familiar a milieu as the Star Trek universe. At the same time, Gilden and his editors have done a good job of playing against the predictable side of Trek fiction, and that innovation ought to be encouraged. It's a close call, and readers will find plenty of company whichever side of the fence they choose.

TO GREEN ANGEL TOWER

Tad Williams

DAW 0-88677-521-3 \$25

J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* has been one of modern fantasy's single

most highly regarded standard works almost since its publication. But though Tolkien's work has inspired and influenced much of the fantasy published since then, there's really been very little written that is directly comparable to Tolkien's classic trilogy—until now. The arrival of *To Green Angel Tower* confirms that Tad Williams has succeeded in bringing off an almost frighteningly ambitious challenge. Just as Aragorn's sword, Anduril, is reformed in the Tolkien story, Williams' "Memory, Sorrow and Thorn" trilogy literally recasts the raw materials from which Tolkien built Middle-earth into a new mythical framework that is nonetheless clearly a successor to the old.

Don't misunderstand: Williams isn't merely rewriting Tolkien or crafting an homage to the Ring trilogy, and Osten Ard is not a clone of Middle-earth. Rather, the two worlds are parallel creations, mined from the same mythological bedrock and crafted with similar intent. Like Tolkien, Williams builds languages and cultures from the ground up, producing a world that is not our own and yet might have been. And although Williams' plot, like Tolkien's, involves an ancient evil and the one magical force on which its bid for ultimate power may turn, Williams' answers to the moral and philosophical questions posed by their confrontation are very much his own.

While young Simon Snowlock isn't Frodo Baggins, the Storm King Ineluki isn't Sauron, and Prince Josua Lackhand isn't Strider, their adventures and trials as the three mystic swords are finally recovered and brought together at the castle called the Hayholt resonate with echoes of that earlier tale. Indeed, as soon all the pieces are in place for the final standoff, Williams promptly rearranges the board before staging a climax that's both understated and devastatingly pyrotechnic.

What may be most striking of all about *To Green Angel Tower* and its companions (which are helpfully summarized in the front of the present volume) is that they're eminently readable, enjoyable stories. The prose is rich but not intimidating, and individual scenes and sections hold the reader's attention without getting bogged down in extraneous material. Though there are better than a thousand pages of text in the trilogy's closing volume, the book doesn't feel padded.

In today's crowded fantasy genre, neither commercial nor artistic success can or should be defined solely on the strength of a work's relationship to the Tolkien trilogy that started it all. Even so, *The Lord of the Rings* is rightly judged as a classic, and Tad Williams' *Memory, Sorrow and Thorn* is on the very short list of tales that strive for—and achieve—the level and scope of storytelling for which Tolkien is noted.

Recurring roles

Roger MacBride Allen turns from his own robots to the acknowledged master of robots with *Isaac Asimov's Caliban* (Ace, \$9.95), and the result is both a first-rate Asimovian tale of intricately tangled logic and a first-rate thriller about a robot whose very existence runs counter to the Asimovian mold. Allen makes the seemingly unthinkable idea of a robot created without the Three Laws of Robotics to guide its behavior both plausible and disturbing, and the Asimov-Allen combination highlights the strengths of both approaches. The book is first of a planned trilogy; future volumes will bear watching.

The other SF yarn in the stack this time is Simon Hawke's *The Romulan Prize* (Pocket, \$5.50). It's new territory for Hawke, who's better known for his comic fantasy, but this Star Trek yarn finds Captain Picard and crew waging a tricky, well-developed battle of wits with a dangerous Romulan commander who's after the secret of a little-known and closely guarded Federation world. Those with an interest in close-order tactical duels should find the novel especially rewarding.

Followers of fantasy, meanwhile, should be sure to investigate the other new Tad Williams book, *Child of an Ancient City* (Atheneum, \$14.95). Written in collaboration with Nina Kiriki Hoffman, this is a well-packaged, dark little tale concerning

a lost caravan of merchants and a compelling yet understated vampire. The Middle Eastern milieu is distinctive and effectively developed, recalling the flavor of *The Arabian Nights* without sacrificing the immediacy and tension integral to the story.

C. Dale Brittain's series about the young, underconfident wizard of Yurt has grown from one book to three in the last few months, acquiring unexpected dimension in the process. The *Wood Nymph and the Cranky Saint* (Baen, \$4.99) is mostly more of the same lightly comic yet wise fare found in the first novel, this time involving more wizards, a plague of horned rabbits, and a great many people with mysterious backgrounds. But there are some real chills as the climax approaches, and Brittain's humor has a gentle quality unusual in the ranks of funny fantasy. And with *Mage Quest* (Baen, \$4.99), he shifts gears several more notches toward high adventure, as Daimbert and friends travel from their version of civilized Europe into the mysterious East looking for missing friends, a rare blue rose, and just possibly the most powerful magical artifact ever created. Brittain builds a good deal of historically sound background into the third volume, which makes it much more thoughtful in tone than its predecessors yet doesn't undermine the humorous elements.

Crypt of the Shadowking (TSR, \$4.95) is the latest entry in the Harpers series, and Mark Anthony gives readers a tricky, suspenseful chronicle of a search-and-liberate mission in which the key complication is that a number of the players on both sides have hidden agendas. There are enough twists, puzzles, and clues to keep events moving at a brisk pace. While this entry in the series owes more than most to the "band of adventurers" gaming convention, it's still lively reading and well-packed with the lore of the Forgotten Realms.

Last but far from least, *Fortress of Frost and Fire* (Baen, \$5.99) continues the series of Bard's Tale novels inspired by the venerable computer game. This one, by Mercedes Lackey and Ru Emerson, is a cheerfully clever tale in which the primary challenge is for our heroes to get out of a castle in which they've been magically confined by a crotchety white dragon. Alert readers will catch some echoes of one of L. Frank Baum's classic Oz books, while others will simply enjoy the unfolding escape plans and pleasantly drawn characters. Beware, though, of taking the tale too lightly; Emerson and Lackey do manage to inject a dramatic note or two into the finish. Ω

Game Reviews

Continued from page 70

mood-setting illustrations (compared to the first edition's total of two, three counting the map page), ranging from the quite impressive to the amateurish but acceptable. What's more, an abundance of GM material has been added, more clearly revealing the nature of the ectoplasmic world and its relation to the physical, explaining in some detail the relation of humor and horror, and how to evoke them during play, and adding a second sample adventure.

This is not a game you want to miss. It is truly an original, and is a great good deal of fun to play.

SPACE GAMER/FANTASY GAMER Magazine. Better Games, \$4.95. This magazine, originally published by Metagaming, then for years by Steve Jackson Games, then purchased by Diverse Talents, Inc., and then published for a short while by Perrin Tong, has recently been acquired and resurrected by Better Games. My first few words in print were carried by the magazine, so I have followed its path with interest over the years. Originally, it covered games by companies across the industry; now it serves in an unusual capacity, as a

vehicle for games by Better Games.

Each issue carries a complete game within its pages, accompanied by short pieces supporting other games in the Better Games stable. Issue #1, for example, contains the BATTLE BORN* "Armored Mere" science-fiction, role-playing game—a revision of part of the original ERA TEN* game—here accompanied by a science-fiction adventure, a fantasy adventure, a "Quick and Dirty" system for villain interrogation in comic-book adventures, another for dragon battles, another for finding one's way through a foreign city, and design notes for "Vampire Hunter" (apparently a yet-to-be-released role-playing game). Issue #2 is primarily devoted to the ROGUE SWORDS OF THE EMPIRE* fantasy role-playing game, a revision of part of Better Games' old BARONY* RPG (which was reviewed in DRAGON issue #179). Issue #3 focuses on the GOOD GUYS FINISH LAST* comic-book role-playing game, a condensation of the company's old superhero game by the same name, and issue #4 focuses on a revision of the STUFF O' LEGENDS* board/role-playing game also reviewed in DRAGON #179.

Those who have read my earlier reviews of Better Games products will recall that while I highly praise the STUFF O' LEGENDS game for its innovation, I decry the

general shoddiness of language and organization of the BARONY game, though it contains many fascinating ideas. The first issue or so of this magazine under Better Games' aegis betray something of that same mix of interesting ideas but rough presentation, though not to the extent of the original games. However, each issue shows dramatic improvement over its predecessor, and issue #4 is a real beauty.

I recommend that you take a look at this new incarnation of SPACE GAMER/FANTASY GAMER magazine. While the material within is often too quirky for use in standard science-fiction or fantasy campaigns, it bears many good ideas. And the reprint of the STUFF O' LEGENDS game is a real treat.

Lester Smith is a game designer and editor at TSR, Inc., and has worked for other game companies in the past such as GDW and FASA. He makes something of a hobby of collecting new, small-press products, particularly quirky role-playing games, which explains the focus of his periodic review columns in this magazine. Ω

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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been canceled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc.: (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited: (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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ARCANACON XI, July 8-11

This convention will be held at Collingwood College in Melbourne. Activities include a wide variety of role-playing game events. Write to: ARCANACON, P.O. Box 125, Parkville 3052, AUSTRALIA; or call Fraser at: (03) 380 5016.

IV-KHAN, July 9-10

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Colo. Guest of honor is John Stith. Activities include gaming, movies, a dealers' room, a miniatures-painting contest, an art show, and an author's banquet. Registration: \$20. There are \$1 game fees. Write to: Miniatures Wargaming Guild, 695 S. 8th St. #55, Colorado Springs CO 80905; or call Perry at: (719) 630-8332.

DOVERCON IX, July 10-11

This convention will be held at the University of New Hampshire's Memorial Union Building in Durham, N.H. Guests include Barbara Young, editor of DUNGEON® Adventures. Activities include RPGA™ Network events and other role-playing, board, and war games, plus seminars, art, costume, and miniatures-painting contests, plus a dealers' room. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 at the door. Single-day rates will be available at the door. Write to: DOVERCON, P.O. Box 753, Dover NH 03820.

FARCON '93, July 16-18

This convention will be held at the Fayetteville, Ark., Hilton hotel. Activities include tournament and open gaming, an art show and auction, a costume contest, a 24-hour video room, dealers, and door prizes. Registration: \$10/weekend preregistered; \$15/weekend at the door (single-day passes are also available). Write to: FARCON, P.O. Box 2022 Station One, U. of A., Fayetteville AR 72701; or call Jesse at: (501) 521-1000, ext. 482.

KINGCON '93, July 16-18

This SF/fantasy/gaming convention will be held at the Delta Brunswick hotel in Saint John, N.B. Events include gaming, a costume contest, an art show and auction, and seminars on writing, virtual reality, computer gaming, and haunted houses. Registration: \$25 (Canadian). Write to: KINGCON, MPO Box 1212, Saint John, N.B., CANADA E2L 4G7; or call: (902) 542-1798.

GRAND GAME CON '93, July 17

This convention will be held at American Legion Post #179 in Grand Rapids, Mich. Events include board, war, and role-playing games. Registration: \$5 preregistered; \$7 at the door. Write to: Will Holden, 1023 California N.W., Grand Rapids MI 49504; or call: (616)454-0112.

STAFFCON '93, July 18

This convention will be held on the Staffordshire University campus-Stafford. Guests include David Gemmell. Activities include role-playing and on-line games, plus merchants. Prizes will be awarded to competition winners. Registration: £25 including meals, £2 admission fee at the door. Write to: Chris Grice, c/o S.U. Office, Staffordshire Univ., Beaconside, Stafford, ST18 0AD, ENGLAND; or call: (07851211738).

IMPACT 3, July 23-25

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Old Mill in Omaha, Neb. Guests include Larry Niven, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Lucy Synk. Activities include RPGA™ Network events, role-playing, miniatures, and board games, an art show and auction, videos, seminars, a masquerade, and dealers. Registration: \$25. Write to: IMPACT 3, P.O. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68104-9998; or call Rahlyns at: (402) 345-9362.

OPERATION: GREEN FLAG '93

July 24-25

This BATTLETECH®-only convention will be held at the Embers in Carlisle, Pa. Events include single and lance competitions, a miniatures-painting contest, gaming, and dealers. Registration costs vary. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

GAMEFEST '93 II, July 30-Aug. 1

This convention will be held at Friends' Hobby Shop in Waukegan, Ill. Events include miniatures, role-playing, and board games. Write to: Friends' Hobby, 1411 Washington, Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708)336-0790.

WINDSOR GAMEFEST XI, July 30-Aug. 1

This convention will be held at the University of Windsor in Windsor, Ontario. Guests include Richard Tucholka. Activities include board and role-playing games, prizes, special events, contests, and movies. Registration: \$7/day or \$12/weekend preregistered; \$8/day or \$15/weekend at the door. Write to: Sandwich Postal Station, P.O. Box 7463 Windsor, Ontario, CANADA.

CANGAMES '93, July 30-Aug. 2

This convention will be held at the Citadel Inn in Ottawa, Ontario. Events include role-playing, miniatures, and board games. Other activities include an auction, dealers, movies, and 24-hour gaming. Write to: CANGAMES, P.O. Box 3358, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA K1P 6H8.

GAMEFEST XIV, Aug. 4-8

This convention will be held in Old Towne in San Diego, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include figure-painting contests and trivia. Registration: \$20 before July 31; \$30 at the door. Write to: GAMEFEST XIV 3954 Harney St., San Diego CA 92110.

AVALONCON '93, Aug. 5-8

This convention will be held at the Hunt Valley Inn in Baltimore, Md. All activities are Avalon Hill and Victory Games board games, with single and team events, demos, and special events for junior players. Write to: Don Greenwood, c/o The Avalon Hill Game Co., 4517 Hartford Rd., Baltimore MD 21214; or call: (301) 254-9200.

- ★ indicates an Australian convention.
- * indicates a Canadian convention.
- ⊗ indicates a European convention.

CUBICON '93, Aug. 6-8**MI**

This convention will be held at the Recreations and Organizations Center on the University of Michigan-Dearborn campus. Events include role-playing and board games. Registration: \$4/day or \$7/weekend. GMs are welcome. Write to: CUBICON '93, c/o SF3, Room 210 ROC, 4901 Evergreen, Dearborn MI 48128; or call: (313) 593-5390.

KINGCON '93, Aug. 6-8**OH**

This convention will be held on the University of Dayton campus. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$15 at the door. Write to: KINGCON, P.O. Box 71, Dayton OH 45401; or call: (513) 223-8973.

SUMMER GAMES '93, Aug. 7**PA**

This convention will be held at the Fire Hall in Kenhorst, Pa. Events include many role-playing game events. Registration: \$7. Write to: SUMMER GAMES, c/o Nathaniel Lee Fischer, 516 March St., Shillington PA 19607; or call Nathaniel at: (215) 775-1548.

CAMELOT V, Aug. 13-15**AL**

This convention will be held at the Tom Beville Center on the University of Alabama-Huntsville campus. Guests include "Zeb" Cook and Troy Denning. Activities include RPG events, dealers, videos, and open gaming. Registration: \$20 preregistered; \$25 at the door. Write to: SAGA, P.O. Box 14242, Huntsville AL 35815-0242; or call: (205) 461-8827.

GOLD CON II, Aug. 14**NJ**

This convention will be held at the American Legion Post in Clark, N.J. Events include role-playing, miniatures, board, and RPGA™ Network events. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$8 before July 31; \$10 at the door. There are no event fees. Write to: AU Gamers, P.O. Box 81, Whippany NJ 07981; or call: (201) 402-9239.

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BUBONICON 25, Aug. 20-22**NM**

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Lodge in Albuquerque, N.M. Guests include Kevin J. Anderson and Robert C. Cornett. Activities include gaming, panels, signings, movies, a masquerade, an art show, an auction, hucksters, and filking. Registration: \$21 before July 31; \$24 at the door. Write to: NMSF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque NM 87176; or call: (505) 266-8905. No collect calls, please.

**NANCON XV/TEXICON '93
Sept. 3-6****TX**

This convention will be held at the Adams Mark hotel in Houston, Texas. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction, a video room, and open gaming. Registration: \$20 before Aug. 14; \$25 thereafter. Single-day passes will be available at the door. Send an SASE to: Greater Houston Gaming, P.O. Box 631462, Houston TX 77263-1462.

PACIFICON '93, Sept. 3-6**CA**

This convention will be held at the Dunfey hotel in San Mateo, Calif. Events include role-playing and board games. Other activities include a flea market, dealers, seminars, movies, painting contests, plus open and miniatures gaming. Write to: PACIFICON, P.O. Box 2625, Fremont CA 94536.

SIOUX CITY GAME CON VIII**Sept. 3-5****NE**

This convention will be held at the Marina Inn in South Sioux City, Neb. Events include a wide variety of gaming events. Registration: \$10/weekend. Send an SASE to: Kurt Lyons, 2801 Jennings, Sioux City IA 51104.

ANDCON '93, Sept. 24-26**OH**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Independence, Ohio. Guests include Jean Rabe, Peter Bromley, Rick Loomis, Colin McComb, Tim Beach, and Slade. Activities include 23 RPGA™ Network events, miniatures games, the national PBM convention, and over 200 other events. Registration: \$17.95/weekend. Daily and visitor passes are available. Write to: ANDCON '93 HQ, P.O. Box 3100, Kent OH 44240; or call: (800) 529-EXPO.

DEMICON 4, Sept. 24-26**MD**

This gaming convention will be held at the Sheraton Conference hotel in Towson, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars, a game auction, a painted-miniatures contest, and dealers. Registration: \$20 before July 31; \$25 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Harford Adventure Society, c/o Strategic Castle, 114 N. Toll Gate Rd., Be1 Air MD 21014; or call: (410) 638-2400.

TACTICON '93, Sept. 24-26**co**

This convention will be held at the Sheraton hotel of Lakewood, Colo. Events include over 150 events in all types of gaming. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044; or call: (303) 665-7062.

EARTH '93, Sept. 25-26**●**

This convention will be held at the Freizeitheim Stocken in Hannover, Germany. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a costume contest, demos, and writing contests. Write to: Arne Rassek, Berliner Str. 23, D-W 3005 Hemmingen 1, GERMANY.

EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY '93**IN**

This convention will be held at the Century Center in South Bend, Ind. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Write to: Mark Schumaker, 1621 Frances Av., Elkhart IN 46514; or call: (219) 294-7019.

GAMECON '93, Sept. 25-26**IN**

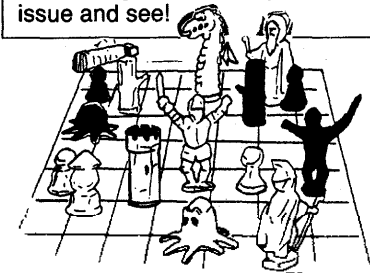
This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn South in Indianapolis, Ind. Guests include Steve Lortz. Activities include a painted-miniatures contest, seminars, and dealers. Registration: \$12 preregistered; \$15 at the door. Game masters are welcome. Send an SASE to: GAMECON, P.O. Box 39035, Indianapolis IN 46239-0035; or call: (317) 862-3982.

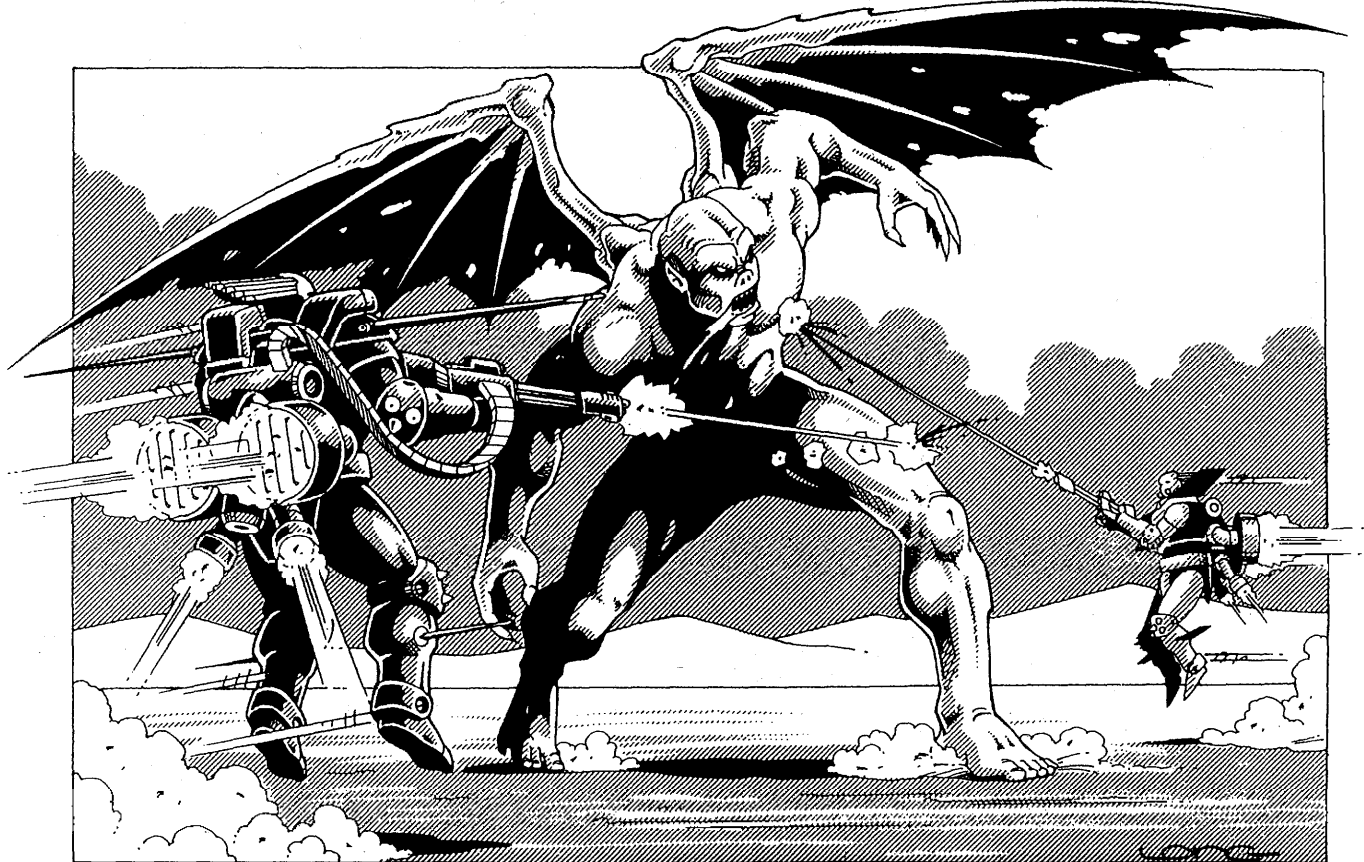
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Ω



What are the latest releases in miniature figures and scenery? What rules are best for tabletop war games? Turn to "Through the Looking Glass" in this issue and see!





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Overcoming Obstacles

Handicapped heroes in super-hero RPGs

by Justin Mohareb

Color by Steve Sullivan

Many gamers think the only super-heroes worth playing in a role-playing game (RPG) are the huge invulnerable, muscle-bound types. They find the idea of playing a handicapped hero somewhat offensive.

Fortunately, the comics do not share this attitude. There have been many heroes who were in one way or another

handicapped. Thor, in his former guise of the mortal Dr. Donald Blake, had a lame leg. Professor Charles Xavier has been confined to a wheelchair for most of his

years as the X-Men's mentor. Psylocke was blinded, and later given cybernetic eyes. Daredevil is blind. Hawkeye is, as a result of an earlier adventure, almost deaf without his hearing aids. Silhouette of the New Warriors uses crutches. Bushmaster, like Donald Pierce of the Reavers, was a quadriplegic who used



cybernetic limbs to replace his own—in Bushmaster's case, cybernetic arms and a snake's lower body. Artie from the Exterminators cannot speak, so he uses his telepathic projection power to communicate. The creator of the Box armor, Roger Bochs, had no legs, so he designed his armor to grant him mobility

Overcoming handicaps

It is possible to run a hero who is not functioning at 100% capacity. There are many powers or gimmicks that can be used to help get around physical handicaps. A simple hearing aid, a robotic servitor, a suit of cybernetically controlled armor, a telekinetic power, or magical spells could be used to negate or counteract handicaps. Cybernetic limbs could be used also. Some heroes, like inventors and psychics, do not engage in physical combat often, so physical handicaps would be less of a hindrance to them. A psychic could be deaf, and "hear" by reading thoughts directed at him. Or he could be able to communicate by true telepathy.

A magic-using or mentalist character could be unable to walk, or could be paralyzed, unable to move at all. This hero still could adventure in her astral form, however. It would be downright interesting to have a character whom the others would never see in a solid form, but only in an amorphous mist resembling a human body. Imagine the character assuming she is immune to physical attacks, but then having to fight a gaseous vampire, or the astral form of an opposing mage or psychic. A wheelchair-bound villain can still be an excellent mastermind, and from the chair he may control various death traps. Imagine an evil genius, trapped in an iron lung, who controls robotic replicas of the heroes to ruin their reputations by robbing banks, etc. Perhaps he hires other villains to do his dirty work for him. Remember Silvermane, the Maggia leader who fought Spider-Man and Cloak and Dagger? He ruled his criminal empire from a bed, and even when the heroes found him, he was still able to protect himself. Later, his brain was placed in a cybernetic body that let him mix it up with them directly.

Benefits for handicapped PCs

Why would a player want to play a character with a physical handicap? One reason is that the Judge might allow bonus Karma points for good role-playing. Another reason is that they could simply be forced to do it. A better reason is that the Judge allows a +1CS to a certain ability or superpower. (Bonus points could be awarded during the character-creation process, if the game system you use has that feature). For example, if Charles Xavier was a starting character, then he would have been given a +1CS to his mental abilities to compensate for his

handicap. Daredevil may have, in response to his blindness, been given a +1CS or +2CS bonus to his Intuition ability, or perhaps was given sonar as a bonus power. Penalties for blind characters engaged in combat without some sort of compensation could be the same as the penalties for fighting in darkness, as given in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Advanced Set Judge's Book.

There may be unforeseen benefits to a physical handicap if the Judge is imaginative. How often has some villain tried to use a hologram, illusion, or some blinding tactic on Daredevil? Hawkeye was immune to Angar the Screamer's and Screaming Mimi's sound-induced hallucinations because he couldn't hear the sounds. Cyborg of the Teen Titans never has to worry about losing an arm because he can simply have it soldered back on. Donald Pierce would be missing an arm right now (if he wasn't already) due to the attack Wolverine made on his extremity in the battle with the Hellfire Club several years ago. A cyborg might also be immune to the stunning or extra damage effects of certain martial arts due to the lack of nerve centers in their cybernetic limbs

Role-playing handicapped heroes

The Judge could use handicaps as a role-playing tool. A character could find it imperative to see the mayor, but she cannot enter City Hall because she cannot get up the steps in her wheelchair and there is no handicapped-access ramp. Using public transportation, going shopping, or even making a phone call can be difficult for many handicapped persons due to problems of accessibility. Perhaps the hero is in the vicinity of a criminal trying to escape from the police. A deaf hero couldn't hear the police sirens. A hero in a wheelchair probably couldn't chase the criminal down a busy city street and catch him. Scenarios even can teach the players about what it is like to be handicapped in today's society. Don't get too preachy about this, though, and don't do this too often so as not to completely frustrate the character. Maybe the handicapped hero can later work to improve accessibility for all handicapped people.

An excellent adventure could be built around a character who hears that there is an NPC capable of removing or curing his handicap. This can lead to the character being healed by magic, regeneration, or some type of cloning. Or, the hero could arrive to find his potential benefactor dead in the snow, and have to avenge his death and retrieve the magical scroll or medical notes containing the potential cure. Perhaps an old enemy hears of the hero's potential cure and kidnaps the NPC before the hero can be cured. The hero will then have a very keen interest in working to rescue the NPC

Whatever you do, don't make it too easy. As always, the characters should have to fight every step of the way to achieve their goals. Say Doctor Doom wanted a plastic surgeon to repair his face. Suppose one of the characters wanted this same surgeon to do a similar service, or that one of the heroes is the surgeon and Victor Von Doom appears in his waiting room one day. Ideas are starting to simmer, aren't they?

Running a handicapped hero can lead to some intense role-playing and a good deal of imaginative power use. Don't hesitate to try such a character in your campaign as a PC (or an NPC if you're a GM). You may be more surprised at what you can do than what you can't.

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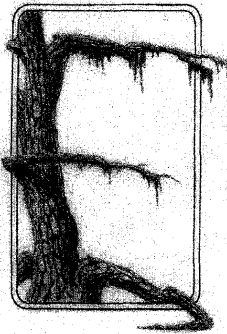
TRADE ENQUIRIES ONLY

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very year, at the end of the trading season, Cobber Waakzam visited Den Huys Island, disappearing up the river as his father had before him and returning in a few days on a log raft with crude baskets full of the feathers that had made his family wealthy. His crew, well paid and happy in Waakzam's service, never complained or questioned; more

important, perhaps, they never followed him upriver. Den Huys was dark and foreboding, the pall of silence that hung over it occasionally pierced by what sounded like the screams of women being tortured.

Moreover, the island got its name from an infamous pirate and black magician who was believed to have lived for centuries before being marooned there by his mutinous crew. Sailors' rumor held that the strange cries were made by the ghosts of all the women Den Huys had ever raped, and that the evil pirate's shade held court on the mountain that rose like a funeral mound in the island's center.

Even in a year when the trading season had been difficult and the delays numerous, the crew said nothing as Waakzam climbed down into the little boat with his bundles of trade goods and began rowing himself up the shadowed river, pulling strongly straight for the island's heart.

Waakzam waited with growing impatience on the dark bank of the river. He hated being late. The trading season was rapidly approaching its end and his last stop, the one he had always thought he could count on, was delayed as well. In the ordinary course of things, the tribe should have met him at the fork in the river, and they should have had his raft made.

Looking down at his little rowboat, its painter tied to one of the many narrow, twisted little trees that hung over the river, he sighed resignedly. It made sense. The whole season had been a scramble from port to port, scraping together a decent return, and it should not have surprised him to find the tribe remiss.

It was his fault, in part. He should have been there weeks before. His father had strongly impressed the date of the meeting on him when he was a small boy. "Remember, Cob," he had said on their first trip together up the dark river, "they are only savages. They do not understand contracts or obligations. They understand that once a year, on the first day of rain, I appear out of the sea and offer them goods of great value for certain feathers that happen to carpet their island.

"What's more," he had gone on as his son plied the oars, "we must never be late. The chief insists on it. It seems that if we come any later, we risk interrupting a religious festival that they hold later in the rainy season. And I don't think we want to get caught up in any savages' religious ceremony." Cobber had laughed nervously, imagining bubbling cauldrons into which he would be thrown as the main course.

Year after year, his father had kept the appointment, and when Cobber had taken over his father's small

The End of Trading Season

By Daniel Hood

Illustrations by Kevin Ward

fleet, he had kept the appointment also. Though both father and son had expanded the business, they always remembered that the Waakzam fortune was built on feathers. Cobber himself had come to look forward to the yearly journey upriver, a trip always made alone, as his father had carefully stipulated.

Here he was now, alone, with the goods of great value—trinkets and bolts of cheap cloth—carefully stowed in his rowboat, but weeks late. The first rain was long past, so that in addition to feeling miserable about the season as a whole and about missing the meeting for the first time in over forty years, he stood with cold water perpetually dripping off the leaves above his head and down his shirt. There was also no place to sit. The ground was saturated and, though not quite mud, certainly well on its way.

Den Huys, he decided gloomily, had an evil aspect entirely suited to its name: dark forests bunched over rough, stony ground rising to the high, brooding hill with its perpetual shroud of mist, while the birds that bore the famous Waakzam feathers uttered their hideous call from time to time.

Cobber waited on the bank for almost an entire day, pacing and fuming at his own bad luck. His back ached from rowing and his feet grew blistered in his wet boots, but he was unwilling to leave. Every few minutes he imagined a noise and peered anxiously through the wet, glistening underbrush, only to be disappointed.

For all his looking, he was not paying attention when the boy finally appeared, running noiselessly through the forest and suddenly appearing before him, out of breath and wild eyed. He was thin and pale, with the straight blond hair of his tribe. Cobber had been about to give up, to call the season a failure, to launch his boat and bid the miserable island goodbye for a year.

"Blessed boy!" he exclaimed, sweeping the half-naked child up in his arms and hugging him. His exultation quickly faded when the boy struggled fiercely to be released. Waakzam let him jump to the ground and watched suspiciously as the boy made to leave the bank, gesturing urgently for the trader to follow.

"Hold on," Cobber said, firmly standing his ground. "Where's Boga?" He repeated the name twice, though the boy only shook his head and gestured inland.

"Boga," the boy said, and shook his head again, grabbing at the merchant's hand.

Finally despairing of making the boy understand, Waakzam allowed himself to be led away from the river. He did not give up asking for Boga, but the boy responded only by urging him to greater speed.

Boga was the name of the tribal chieftain's son, or as much of it as the trader could pronounce. Just as his father had made a great friend of the old chieftain, Cobber had gone out of his way to befriend the chief's son. It was always Boga who met him at the fork, Boga who supervised the building of the raft, Boga who accepted the trinkets and cloth and turned over the feathers, Boga who helped him load the feathers and his rowboat onto the raft for the trip downriver. He had even become Boga's blood brother some years before, in a ceremony which, though he never referred

to it in his comfortable house in civilized Freeport, had moved him very much.

Now, trotting through the wet forest with his blistered feet complaining, he wondered what might have happened to his friend. Life was hard for the tribe, he knew. Every year certain faces—often young ones—were missing. Boga, though, was a superbly healthy man, a giant among the tribe and well respected for his strength and intelligence.

Maybe an accident? he thought, stumbling over a root. He tried to mutter a prayer, but the pace the boy had set drove the breath from him, and he had to concentrate on keeping up.

Soon enough, though, he began to see signs of the tribe—a clearing here and there, stubble and discarded stalks indicating that the tribe's few crops had already been harvested. The boy led him on, urging even greater speed as they came closer to the village.

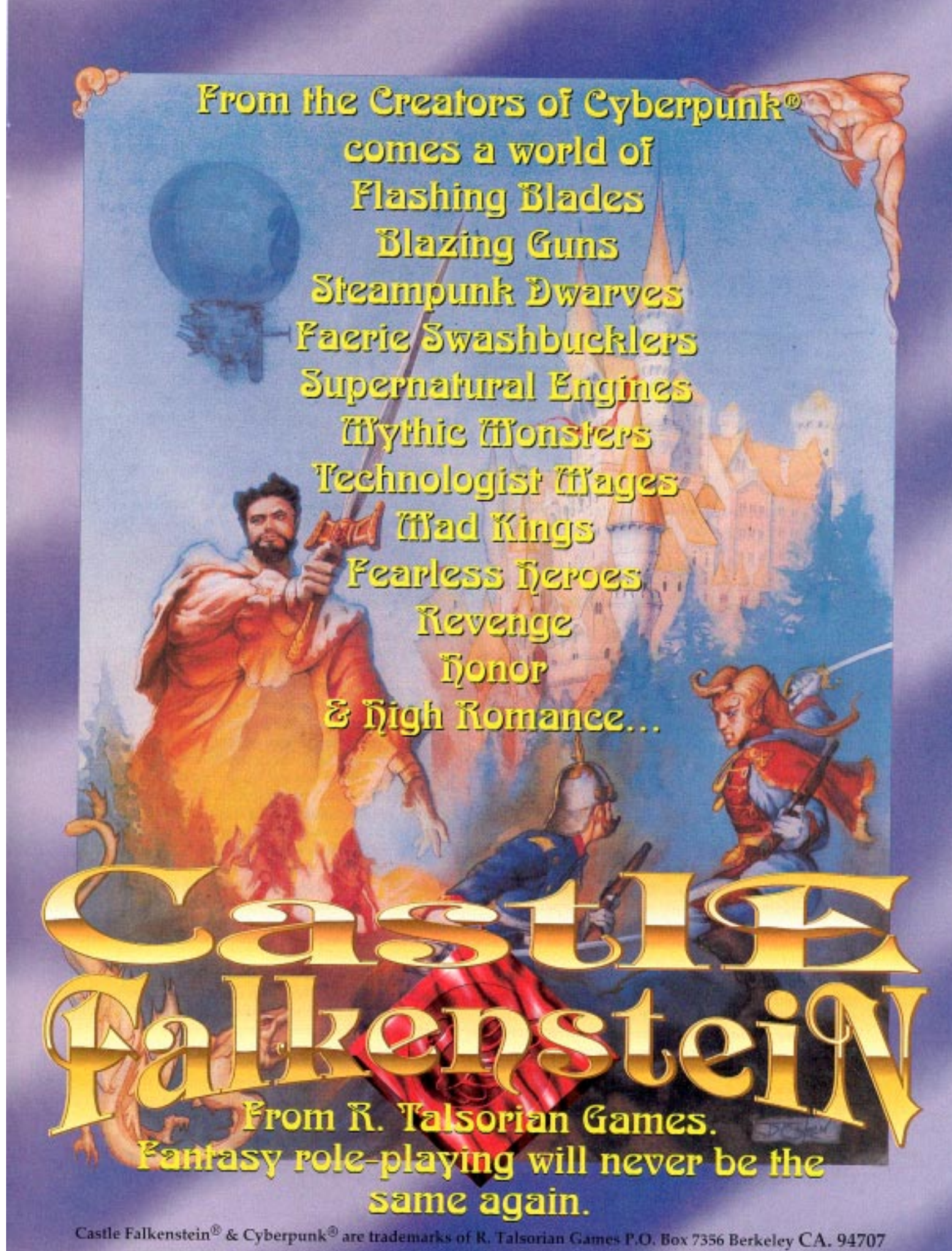
Finally Waakzam stumbled into the broad clearing that was the tribe's village that year. Every year they moved to a different spot, but it always looked the same: a cluster of rickety thatched huts littered with primitive tools for hunting and trapping, the ground beaten down to smooth brown earth studded with stones, small fires everywhere. He paused for a moment at the edge of the village, ignoring the boy's impatience, and caught his breath. It was the same scene he remembered, but the season was different. The rains had now been falling for almost three weeks, and the village somehow looked squalid, the huts bedraggled, the fires sputtering smokily under improvised awnings of skins and branches. The people were paler, too; he was used to seeing them just after the dry season, when they looked bronze and healthy. Now the rains had begun to bleach them, leaving them a pale, fishbelly white, somehow spiritless.

What surprised Cobber most, though, was the way they looked at him. There was none of the joy he was used to, the exuberant welcome in the form of whoops and shouting, impromptu dancing, extravagant displays of affection. They certainly noticed his arrival, but none approached him. Some actually turned away, hurrying off to avoid him.

Scowling at the reception, and knowing it was his own fault for being late, Cobber allowed the boy to hurry him through the village to the chief's hut. The tribe parted silently before them, and he felt a little like the condemned men in Freeport, drawn through the streets in tumbrels to their execution. He fought to suppress a shudder and felt depression settling in on him, as though his being late had brought the rains, had allowed the life to be washed out of the tribe. For the first time in a long while, he remembered the ceremony his father had mentioned, and wondered if he were interrupting it.

The boy led the way to the biggest hut in the village and left him there, disappearing into the rain. Cobber drew himself up and stepped through a wide gap in the thatch.

Smoke filled the hut, but he knew where to find the chief, sitting crosslegged on a skin-covered settee on



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the left—and to the tribe, lucky—side of the door, out of the draft. The chief was a spare, stringy man. Sitting crosslegged and motionless, he looked like a carved idol of famine.

"Coppah Wazan," he intoned as the trader entered, nodding ponderously, his eyes closing with majestic slowness.

"Slafomir Tokowa," the trader responded, bowing, unintentionally mangling the chief's name as much as the chief had butchered his own.

The interview and its aftermath were as disappointing as any he had ever had. The chief spoke no Freeporter, but he managed to communicate a great deal through signs and repetition and facial expressions, most of which were sad. Boga, Cobber gathered, was dead, though when he pressed the chief to find out how, the old man only shook his head, his eyes misting. When it was finally clear that the chief could not, or would not, tell him how his son had died, Cobber reluctantly allowed the conversation to turn to the feathers. With a morose expression, the chief led him across the muddy village to a small hut, and Cobber went in alone.

Simply woven baskets filled with once-brightly colored feathers reached to the ceiling, but the merchant in him could see that most of them were ruined. They had gotten wet waiting for him, and those he could see were moldy. He did not blame the tribe and decided to give them the goods he had brought anyway, but it was clear that he would make no profit from the stop.

He stepped out of the hut and into a hissed argument between the old chief and the tribe's shaman, a spindly little man with a withered leg and a crutch, wrapped in a ragged leopard's skin. As soon as he appeared, the chief cut the argument short with a terse command, and the shaman hobbled away, sparing only a brief glance of distaste for the trader.

Cobber wondered again if he had interrupted the festival. He had noticed no obvious preparations, but the shaman's look of disgust had not been open to interpretation. It all seemed part of his failure to arrive on time. The rains, the cold reception of the tribe, the ruined feathers, Boga's disappearance—Cobber scowled miserably over them all, feeling guilty, though he knew it was unavoidable. The season had been bad.

Dinner with the chief only served to deepen his depression. All of the usual dishes were served, including the tribe's potent wine, but with none of the customary gaiety. No other members of the tribe attended, so it was only he and the chief, and he found that the old man could not meet his gaze. Eating his food without tasting it, Cobber wondered if he, too, thought the trader's lateness was responsible for all the things that had gone wrong on the island.

The two men agreed wordlessly to go to bed early, without smoking their customary pipe together. Knocking back a last mouthful of the harsh liquor, Cobber excused himself with a bow, and was shown to a hut next to the chief's by one of the old man's wives.

As he searched for sleep on his raised frame of skins, Cobber heard yet another hissed argument from the

chiefs hut: the shaman's voice high pitched and threatening, the old man's stubborn. Strangely, the voices, in a language he did not know, filtered by the rain and the intervening thatch, lulled him, and he finally slept.

Nightmares filled his head, visions of torches and solemn faces, of the crippled shaman leering at him, of wet leaves pressing down on him, shutting him in, crushing him.

Cobber felt rain on his face and heard the voices of those around him before he felt the slaps, though it was the none-too-gentle slaps that opened his eyes. His head felt thick; his brain was wrapped in prickly cotton. The shaman was looming over him, his face twisted in a sneer, gray clouds over his shoulder. Cobber shook himself and struggled to rise, only to slump back, aware now that his hands were bound and that his back was wet and cold from lying on the ground.

The shaman stepped back from Cobber and, with a gesture, set two tribesmen to hauling the trader to his feet. At first his legs refused to hold him, but after a moment's shuffling he brought them under control. The rain was helping to clear his head.

Still supported by the two men, Cobber took in the scene in quick glimpses, shaking his head in between to get rid of the cobwebs.

There were only six of them: Cobber, his two supports, the shaman and a boy who attended him, and the chief, standing off to one side. They were on a wide shelf of rock set in a hillside; a few feet in front of them there was a drop of almost ten feet to another, wider shelf, away from which the thick forest descended into the sea, barely visible in the rain. Behind them rose the funeral mound, the high hill in the center of the island. *Behind*, Cobber thought, shaking his head fiercely. Though there was no sun to judge, he knew he was on the far side of the island, where he had never been, the hill and the forest and the river between him and his ship.

Once Cobber was awake, the shaman paid him no more attention. He stepped to the edge of the shelf and put out his hand. The boy jumped forward and handed him a skin satchel, out of which came a black square of folded cloth and a horn.

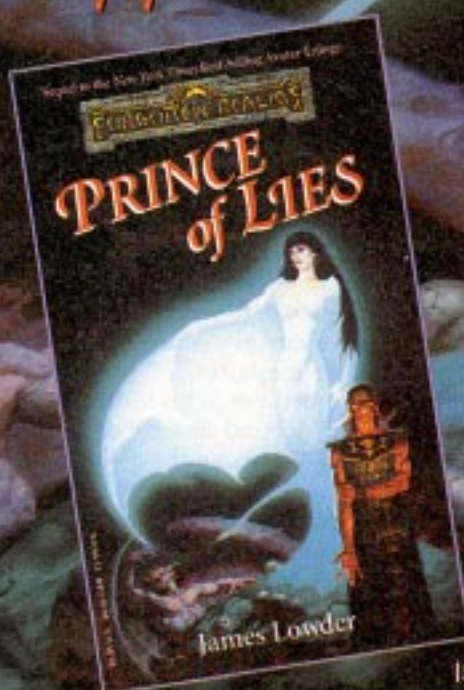
Cobber froze when he saw them. He brought only brightly colored cloth to the island, not black, and the horn looked like the kind used in Freeport sea-hunts. He tried to catch the chiefs attention, but the old man avoided his eye, staring stolidly out over the shelf, his face a motionless mask.

The boy provided a long pole which the shaman fixed into a hole bored in the rock; he fixed one edge of the black cloth to the pole and let it hang, spilling its sodden folds down along the wood. It looked thin and worn. There was no wind, and the flag refused to fly, curling around the pole like a snake, but the shaman paid it no attention. He raised the horn to his lips and blew on it inexpertly, producing a weak imitation of a Freeporter call. Cobber winced at the noise; the tribesmen, though, sprang into frightened action. The shaman's attendant suddenly broke and ran, disappearing back up the hill. The two guards hauled



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Cobber up to the edge, the shaman limping aside to make room.

Though the drop was not much, Cobber tensed himself against the shove he knew was coming, and when the shaman gave a command, he pushed backward as hard as he could. He was strong, and the guards were not ready for resistance. For a moment the three of them hovered at the edge, struggling. Then the chief shouted, and a flock of birds exploded from the forest below them.

The guards dropped Cobber's arms and dashed off after the shaman's attendant. Cutting the shaman's protests short, the chief approached Cobber, pulling a flint knife from his belt.

Aware of the drop behind him, the trader brought his bound hands up, determined to fight, but the chief simply cut the bonds with a single stroke of his knife.

"Coppah," he said, tears suddenly standing in his eyes, and pulled him close, hugging him roughly. "Coppah," he said again, pushing him away. He thrust the blade at Cobber, who took it suspiciously, vastly confused. Then the chief shoved him, and he was slipping from the shelf, twisting, his feet over nothing, his knee banging hard against the stone, and he fell sprawling to the stone below.

He landed poorly, all on one ankle and then down onto the knee he had hit going over the edge, losing the knife in the process. A jolt of pain shot up from his knee, sending him unsteadily to his feet, hopping, cursing. He saw the knife, stumbled over and snatched it, turned to look up at the ledge above him.

The chief was gone; only the shaman remained, and he was glaring down at Cobber with impotent hatred. Cobber jabbed the knife in his direction, and he took an involuntary step backward before spewing down a string of curses. Smiling, the trader turned his attention to the lower shelf.

Gray stone rolled in broken waves to the forest, cracks and small crevasses darkening beneath the rain. There were chunks and splinters of white in the cracks. Cobber prodded one with his foot, and stopped when he realized it was a bone. Behind him, the shaman began to laugh and stifled it when another flight of birds exploded from the forest close to the shelves. He said something in an awestruck whisper that made Cobber spin back to him, but the shaman was already gone, hobbling away into the forest.

"The noose," Cobber said to himself, the words he thought the shaman had whispered. He knew the cripple spoke no Freeporter, but that was what it had sounded like.

With the shaman gone, he noticed the silence, the complete lack of movement all around him. There was only the patter of rain on stone. Slowly, he bent down and picked up one of the bones, running his fingers over it carefully. It was brittle and dirty with age. The others looked equally old; there were no fresh kills, no bones that had not spent at least a year since the last ceremony pounded by the rain or exposed to the sun.

He knew then that he had not just interrupted the ceremony his father had mentioned; he had joined it, had become the main attraction. He was a sacrifice,

like the owners of the bones that littered the shelf.

"But what am I being sacrificed to?" The bones did not look chewed, and he had never seen any animals on the island big enough to take on a man. His eyes went to the pole on the upper ledge, and the black flag. Playful gusts of wind tugged at it, pretending to spread it only to drop it before the design could be revealed. He caught a hint of white at the center, but the wind refused to oblige. In any case, he was more interested in how the flag had gotten there in the first place. He knew no one on the island had made it. Like the bones, it was old, the edges frayed and tattered.

Cobber did not have long to consider the mystery. He was a merchant, a practical man, and after a few moment's consideration he set his mind to getting out of the situation rather than unraveling it. The ledge had an overhang and was too high for him to reach. The forest on either side looked nearly impenetrable, a tangle of trees and creepers and thick underbrush. That left going forward, down off the lower shelf toward the sea.

He had gone three halting steps that way, favoring his hurt knee, when the forest in front of him parted and disgorged a man.

At first he thought it was Boga—the shape was right, and from a distance the features looked like his friend's—and started to hop forward as fast as he could. But as the man came farther onto the shelf, Cobber stopped and then backpedaled a few clumsy steps.

The man was a vision of Boga risen from the grave. His skin was loose and wrinkled where it had once stretched over powerful muscles; his hair straggled in sparse clumps over a leprous scalp; and where Boga's gleaming smile had once sat, rotten teeth like black corn leered at the trader. Cobber held the stone knife up and waved it warningly.

"Stay away," he said, his voice quavering, and then more strongly, "Stay back."

At the sight of the knife, the rotten man stopped his shambling advance, his sagging face twisting in an approximation of calculation.

"What's this?" He lisped horribly, his broken teeth almost inadequate to the task of speech, his voice a thin husk. "A Freeporter?"

Cobber growled low in his throat and gripped the knife so hard his hand shook. Boga spoke no Freeporter, he knew, and the chief had said he was dead.

"You're a sailor," the rotten man lisped. "No! Not a sailor—a merchant!" His lips writhed like snakes and made a self-congratulatory smile. Raising one withered arm, he indicated Cobber's clothes. "You're too well dressed and too healthy to be just a sailor. Gods, you're healthy!"

He began to sidestep around Cobber in a circle, forcing the merchant to pivot to keep up. He moved quickly, though his legs were as thin as twigs and his muscles were barely seen cords.

"I'll like being you," he said.

Spinning to keep up with the rotten man, Cobber shuddered involuntarily. "What do you mean?"

"You're my body this year," the carcass explained

through his decaying grin. A thought hit him and he stopped moving, poised between Cobber and the higher shelf. The flag still teased from the staff, puffing in and out as if it were breathing. "Have you been here before?" Cobber did not answer, unwilling to speak, wondering if the stone dagger would do him any good. "You have, I'll bet, and those savages never told me. They never told me!"

For a moment his eyes flashed and he drew up Boga's body into a posture of rage, and then he started side-stepping again, his wretched smile slowly returning.

"You must have been special to them, if you came and went before and they never gave you to me. How long, trader? Three years? Four years? Longer?"

"Forty," Cobber spat. His knee was aching, and the rain had started dripping into his eyes.

"Forty!" The number seemed to stagger the rotten man, but he continued his circle, passing again the point where he had entered the shelf. "You're not forty!"

"My father was here before me," Cobber said. He could not keep his eyes from the figure of his friend's body, the loping sidestep, the feverish glow in his sunken eyes. He felt like a bird before a snake.

"Your father before you! Forty years! And they never gave me your body! I've been here almost eighty, and they've given me one of their own every year! They didn't even argue when I took this one," he slapped Boga's sunken chest, "and he was the chiefs own whelp! I picked him out myself, and that bunch of savages just nodded and tied him up for me, but they never sent your father or you. You must be very special to them."

We were never late, Cobber thought, but he said noth-

ing, trying to concentrate on revolving, keeping the knife between him and his friend's wasted body. If the chief had sacrificed his own son one year, a mere trading partner would seem like very little the next.

"But then, they gave you a knife," Boga's corpse went on, "and you're not bound. Maybe they thought you'd kill me." The idea set him to laughing, a reedy cackle that scraped at Cobber's nerves. "They'll have to pay for that. I'll burn their miserable hovels down around their ears." He extended one bony finger and mouthed a word; the wet tangle of creepers he was pointing at burst into smoky flame.

The unnatural fire stunned Cobber. He was not thinking properly, he knew, not planning, not fighting. Things were piling up in his head, questions that fought for attention, beating out his need to get away.

"Who are you?"

This brought a fresh spate of cackles from the corpse. Still circling, he raised his arms grandly and proclaimed, "I am a god!" Laughing, he set two more fires in the rain-drenched underbrush.

"You're not a god," Cobber retorted, shaking his head. He simply could not think properly; the corpse was ensnaring him in some way. He thought of magic.

"I may as well be," the rotten man went on. "They give me sacrifices, don't they? Though never one so healthy as you. You're fat and strong. And you're a Freeporter; you must have a ship waiting for you."

The circling had brought them around again, with the rotten man between the trader and the flag. Thought of the ship stopped the rotten man, and his eyes went round. "A ship!"



'You'll never see it,' Cobber promised grimly, taking a deep breath to steady his head. A real gust of wind swept the shelf, prying the reluctant flag from the pole and revealing its emblem: a crude skull and crossbones, faded and moldy with immense age. Cobber understood then what the shaman had said, how he had butchered the Freeporter name. 'You're Den Huys,' he whispered, remembering the stories of black magic associated with the name.

The rotten man offered him a mocking bow. 'The same. In much reduced circumstances, I'm afraid. But once I get your body and your ship, I'll be able to get myself back to Freeport, and then the bodies I take won't rot quite so quickly. With the right supplies, I should be able to keep a body like yours for almost a whole lifetime. You've no idea what it's like to have a body rot under you in less than a year. And besides, a corpse isn't likely to attract the ladies as much as, say, a fat Freeport merchant.'

Den Huys bowed again, spreading his skeletal hands, palms up, to indicate Cobber.

With the circling stopped, the trader found his head clearing. While the corpse spoke, he tried to weigh his chances. Den Huys' last words, though, made his decision for him, and he broke and ran for the forest at the edge of the shelf.

His toe caught in a crack and his knee gave way. He sprawled at length on the rock, keeping the knife at the expense of torn knuckles and a splintered nail. Den

Huys pounced on him, faster than he could believe, and hauled him off the ground with a strength that did not reside in the wasted muscles of Boga's arms.

The pirate held him firmly, drinking in the sight of Cobber's healthy body.

'Your ship and your body, trader,' he whispered, his lips stretching back to smile.

'I'm damned if I'll let you have my ship or my body,' Cobber snarled. His feet dangling in the air, he drove the stone blade into the corpse's bloated stomach. Den Huys did not even flinch, though he stretched his arms out to hold the trader away. A rush of foul gas erupted around the blade, the stench so strong that Cobber had to turn his head and squeeze his eyes shut.

'Trader,' he heard Den Huys say, 'you're damned anyway.'

At the end of his worst trading season ever, Cobber Waakzam came down the river in his little rowboat, with no feathers. Immense black clouds of smoke hung over the island, rising from a section of the forest deep in the interior.

Despite the obvious failure of the stop, the final blow of an already miserable season, his crew thought Cobber seemed strangely satisfied. In fact, as the first mate reported to his messmates, when the merchant gave the order to set a course for Freeport, he was smiling as though it had been his best year ever.

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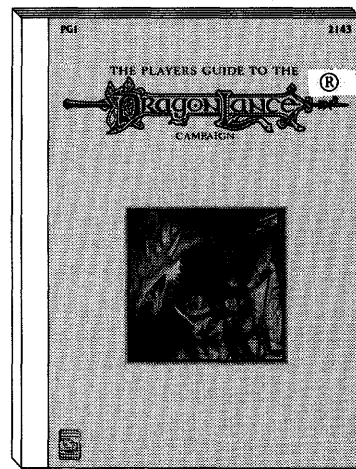
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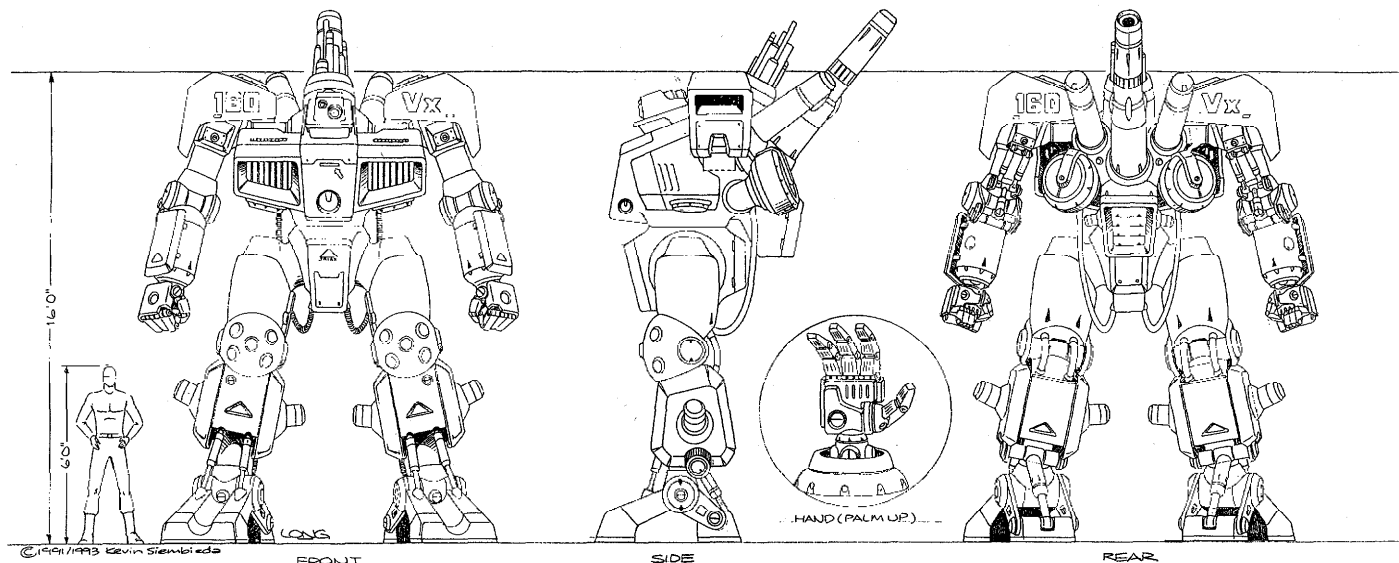
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Unfortunately, we don't have any photographs available yet to show you what we have planned. The best we can do is show some of the front, side and back views created as reference guides for our sculptors.

Initial figures will be **Rifts** characters and, with time, will include just about every major player character, D-Bee, bot, cyborg, dragon, monster and villain in the series. **Other figures** will include characters and mecha from **Macross II** and we have several other plans up our sleeves, so keep an eye out for all our products.

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CAMPAIGN JOURNAL:



Fitting into the new WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting

by Carl Sargent

Artwork by Ken Frank

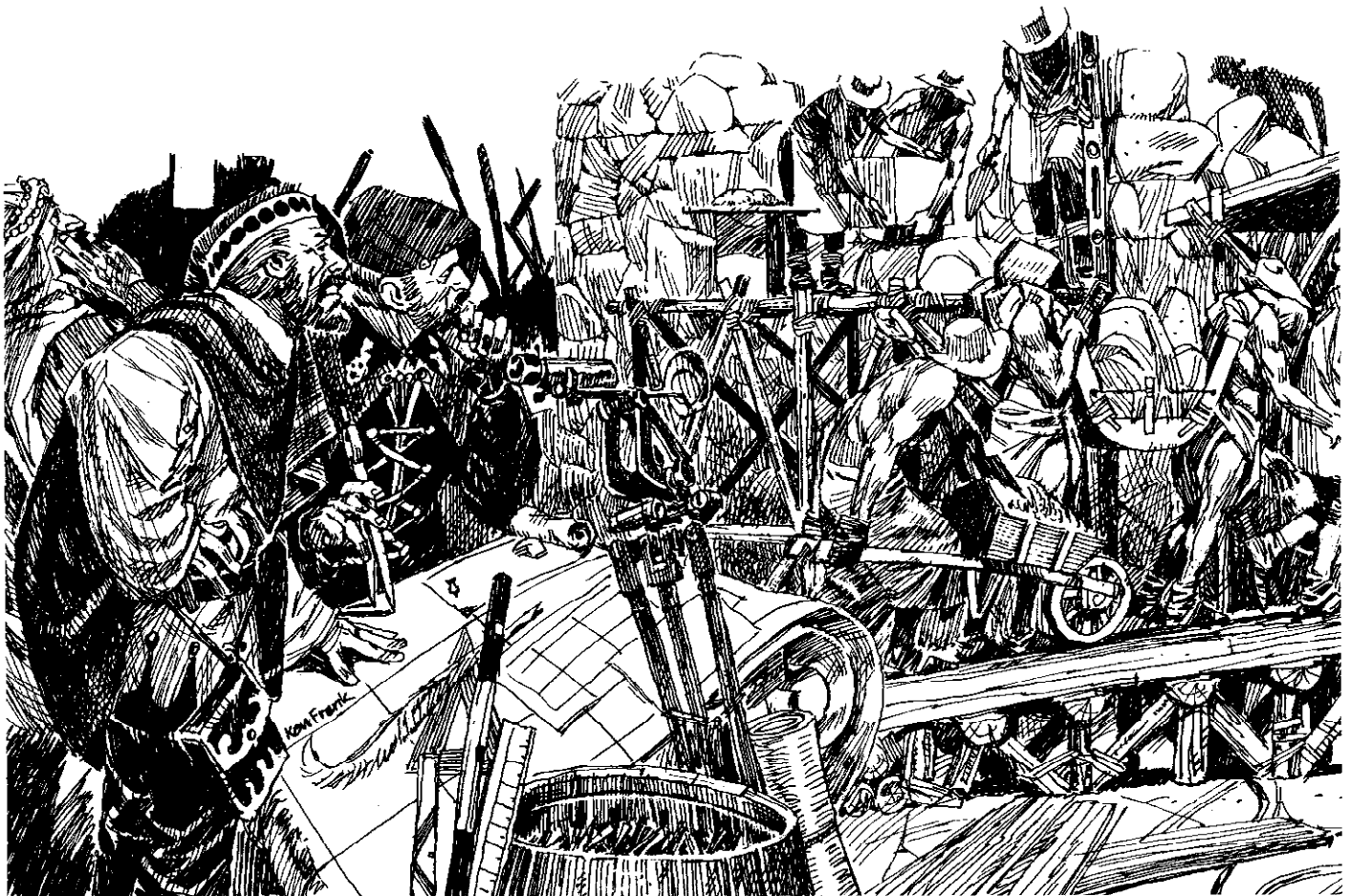
Some WORLD OF GREYHAWK® gamers have a problem with the Campaign Book of the From *The Ashes* boxed set. They have developed the lands around the Free City of Greyhawk in their own campaigns, and now find that the Campaign Book adds all kinds of locations and characters to a part of Oerth they may have spent a lot of time developing themselves. So, while they may like the new material (at least I hope they do!), they may have difficulty integrating it into their ongoing

GREYHAWK® campaign. Here, I'm going to suggest some ways for introducing the "official" version into DM's individual versions of the campaign world.

Crucial changes

There are some changes that have to be made, because the great Greyhawk Wars (as detailed in the boxed set of the same name) have changed this game world in some fundamental ways. The key theme here is the Free City's control of a much

wider area than it controlled before the wars. It has assumed control over western lands from Dyvers (almost by default) in the Cairn Hills, and Abbor-Alz to the east (by treaty from Urnst), and along the Wild Coast to the south (to establish a "security zone" to keep the Orcish Empire of the Pomarj at bay). Individual campaigns should reflect this growth of territory. This isn't difficult to adapt. In the case of the western and eastern lands, nothing much has changed by way of the people



and places there, so the DM doesn't have to uproot his own creations, just adapt them to the changes. If he has groups or settlements that might not be expected to like Greyhawk's rule, then they can come to some arrangement or understanding with the Free City; in the Campaign Book, there are examples of folk who don't accept rule by Greyhawk as such, like Karistyne in the Abbor-Alz or Greysmere in the Cairn Hills. Instead, they may sign some pact or deal with the Free City. Use the Campaign Book examples for ideas for such deals.

To the south, though, Hardby has become a militia (specifically naval) base of real importance; this shouldn't be tricky to implement, since Hardby paid tribute to Greyhawk before the wars. Narwell and Safeton, along the Wild Coast, have changed more dramatically. Here, while the DM doesn't have to use the new city plans if he has his own designs, he does have to accept the changes (orcs run out of town, military rule, etc.) that Greyhawk's rulership has brought. This is a land of war; there are huge orcish armies to the south. Greyhawk has to have this buffer zone for its own security.

Changing Narwell and Safeton, and anywhere else, can be done in one of two ways. The DM can either role-play his campaign through the events of the wars that don't directly affect the Free City much, which allows him three years of game time to bring change in gradually, or else advance the campaign date three years and give players a summarized list of changes. The most important thing is that the events of the wars provide a plausible reason for all kind of changes that allow the DM to introduce places and people from the Campaign Book.

Refugees and other newcomers

A simple rationale for bringing in new folks and places is that the wars have driven many people to the relative safety of Greyhawk's lands. Many characters from the Campaign Book may be new settlers, and their backgrounds can be changed to make them such. For example, at Peculiar Manor the Ekbiri Sanjaray Mohsin could be rewritten as an ex-dweller of Ket who left when war brewed, bringing his gold to a more peaceable place and either buying up this settlement (if it existed in the DM's campaign) or paying for it to be built (if it wasn't there before). This example shows that not just new NPCs but also new locations can be developed with the war as a backdrop and rationale.

After the wars and the Pact of Greyhawk, there are many new permanent ambassadors in town from the major signatories. This allows the DM to bring in other NPCs on their coat-tails, or to use his own established NPCs in conjunction with them (becoming their spies, attaches, etc.).

What to add?

DMs don't have to introduce new locations and NPCs fully fledged. If you have mapped the area where Karistyne's castle is, for example, then your campaign can have Karistyne (perhaps as a Nyrondese exile) beginning work building her new home elsewhere and only just beginning to attract the powerful followers, and the political influence, she has in the Campaign Book. This allows the new NPC and location to grow into the existing campaign world, rather than just being transplanted right into it.

Most of the new locations in the Campaign Book can be moved painlessly enough. If Pargenter's Mine is exactly where you already have a mine, camp, castle, or whatever, move the mine. As a general rule, don't move them too far away from where they are mapped in the Campaign Map unless you have to (because you've fully mapped the area for many miles around and the new location can't plausibly be a new discovery), and try to keep the new location at least within the same broad area (still within the Cairn Hills, Abbor-Alz, etc.).

New discoveries

There are many new locations that can quite plausibly be recent discoveries in your campaign. Indeed, your PCs may even get to be the ones who discover them. Perhaps Pargenter's Mine has only just been discovered by a group of gnomes, who have begun to understand what they've got their hands on. The Vale of the Lamia can have a veil of illusion around it, explaining why no one has mapped it out before. The Great Barrows could be reduced in number, and protected by hostile ogres or hill giants, explaining why no one's got close enough to come away with more than a wild rumor in the past. Indeed, the Campaign Book actually has plenty of sites that aren't even mapped because no one is certain of where they are; even in a well-explored world, not every square inch of terrain can be known. Then, too, some explorers can have made mistakes, messed up their mapping, etc.

A mere handful of new locations could actually appear fully-formed out of nowhere. Shiner's Castle Eyebite in the Wild Coast is an example. The place is clearly magical and there's no reason why you couldn't have the whole edifice literally appear overnight in its "new" location (where did it teleport from?). Don't overdo this, though, because it defies belief to have a whole string of new places pop up out of nowhere, but in a few instances this saves the DM a lot of pondering!

Some new locations could be transformations. The bizarre Doomgrinder, the stone windmill counting down the years until the end of the world (or so the legend says), could be a transformation from

a suitable obelisk, standing stone, or hilly peak in the Cairn Hills; over a period of days or weeks, this edifice simply seems to melt out of the stone and form into its current shape.

Equivalents and hybrids

Some new locations are difficult to transplant into an established campaign world because of their size or character. The major dwarven settlements of Karakast and Dumadan are examples. It's not likely that many DMs can have a large, fortified settlement of nearly a thousand dwarves appear out of nowhere if she has this area mapped out in her campaign world.

What needs to be done here is either to move these places to unmapped areas, or else modify the dwarven settlements of the DM's own to resemble the settlements in the Campaign Book more closely. For example, the discovery of a buried bardic artifact could give dwarves some of the qualities of the Karakast group from the Campaign Book. Alternatively, the DM may leave out the new scripted locations and just slot his own equivalents into the same "political" role in the game world. Just change the script for those who deal with them in the Campaign Book accordingly (so, if you don't have Karakast, the bard Nirifel wouldn't have an aim of returning there, for example).

You can also take ideas from some Campaign Book locations and put them somewhere else; something as simple as the "Safeton Physic" (the wind that blows strongly into Safeton's harbor) can be moved to some other coastal town, if you've developed Safeton yourself and this is a new element you don't want to suddenly add.

Feel free, if such adaptations don't work for you, just to delete some new locations that aren't of major importance! Zendredla's Tower in the Gnarley Forest is an example—if you don't want a mad wizard atop a lighthouse in the middle of the forest, don't place her there. But you might still want to have some other cover story and location of your own for the acolyte/spy living with her.

Society

The Campaign Book teems with new NPCs and groups. There are so many that the boxed set includes a reference card allowing the DM to find all the major NPCs published in the Campaign Book, and the earlier *City of Greyhawk* boxed set. There are also notes on how to use them, not the least important of which is that you really don't have to use every NPC listed!

However, there's one general shift that should be reflected in Greyhawk campaigns around the Free City. Generally, non-evil humans, elves, dwarves, and other races tend to cooperate better than

they used to. This is simply because of external threats; these take the form of humanoids to the south and Iuz to the north (and his distrusted Rhennee servants across the Nyr Dyv). At such times, people tend either to isolate themselves in cohesive ingroups (Greysmere) or form alliances with others (like the Gnarlery Rangers).

This shift allows the DM to change details of his own NPCs to bring them closer to Campaign Book groups if he wishes. The Gnarlery Rangers are a good example. They work hard to make friends among elves, gnomes, werebears, and other groups of the Gnarlery, watching out for incursions of southern humanoids in particular. They know the threat lying across their lands, and form alliances to keep it at bay. If the DM already has a loose organization of Gnarlery Rangers other than that scripted in the Campaign Book, he can bring them closer to the "official" version if he wants to. They now have more structured leadership; they wear their emblems as a visible sign to others of their allegiances; they have built camps (or aided woodsmen or the Greyhawk militia to do so) allowing the DM to introduce new locations such as Corustaith, Beltander, or Tricaster, and so on. All these are logical consequences of the changes of the Greyhawk Wars.

More generally, the Free City is working

hard to secure alliances across its lands. The DM can review the NPC groups and factions he has and consider how they will respond to such overtures. At least some should respond to external danger and threat by allying with the Free City; this is a vital change in campaign mood.

Adapting NPCs

Melf is an NPC detailed in the Campaign Book, and some DMs will certainly have their own versions of him. His goals and aims should be those written in the Campaign Book, and they won't be difficult for the DM to use; if you have a different statistical (level, ability scores, etc.) version, that's fine. If you've already got an ambassador of the Duchy of Urnst in the Free City, you can keep your own version while keeping the politics of the Duchy as scripted in the Campaign Book, or decide that a new ambassador was needed for the complex, post-war politics of the place. Generally, the exact details of the NPCs statistics don't matter, but their role should not be too different from the Campaign Book version unless there's a very good reason in your campaign world! Changing their role too much may clash with the post-war Flanaess political picture, and since future products obviously will be based on that picture, it may be easier to make changes you need now rather than later. With other NPCs of

major importance, it's their roles that count. The wars can justify changes in their views and positions, so think through how your NPCs will react to what's been happening around them.

Conclusion

In the end, your campaign world is your own. If you've gone a very different route with Greyhawk, then it may be too difficult for you to change everything dramatically now. On the other hand, the wars give you the opportunity to bring in major "reality shifts" (changing over from 1st to 2nd Edition AD&D® rules is a big enough change in some ways!). Using later sourcebooks will be easier if your version isn't wildly different from the "official" version, although *The Marklands* and *Iuz the Evil* will give you enough ideas to cannibalize to keep you happy if you do have a very different campaign.

Stay with us! We know many Greyhawk gamers have been around a while and are loyal to this game world. New products have been written carefully to build upon old sources and be consistent with them, while developing from that base. Whether you're running your own campaign, or have followed the wars and the new Flanaess closely, we hope you'll appreciate the sourcebooks and adventures the future will bring.

Ω

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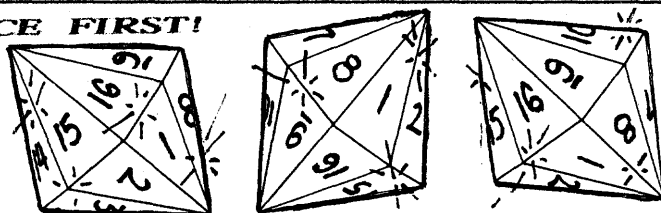
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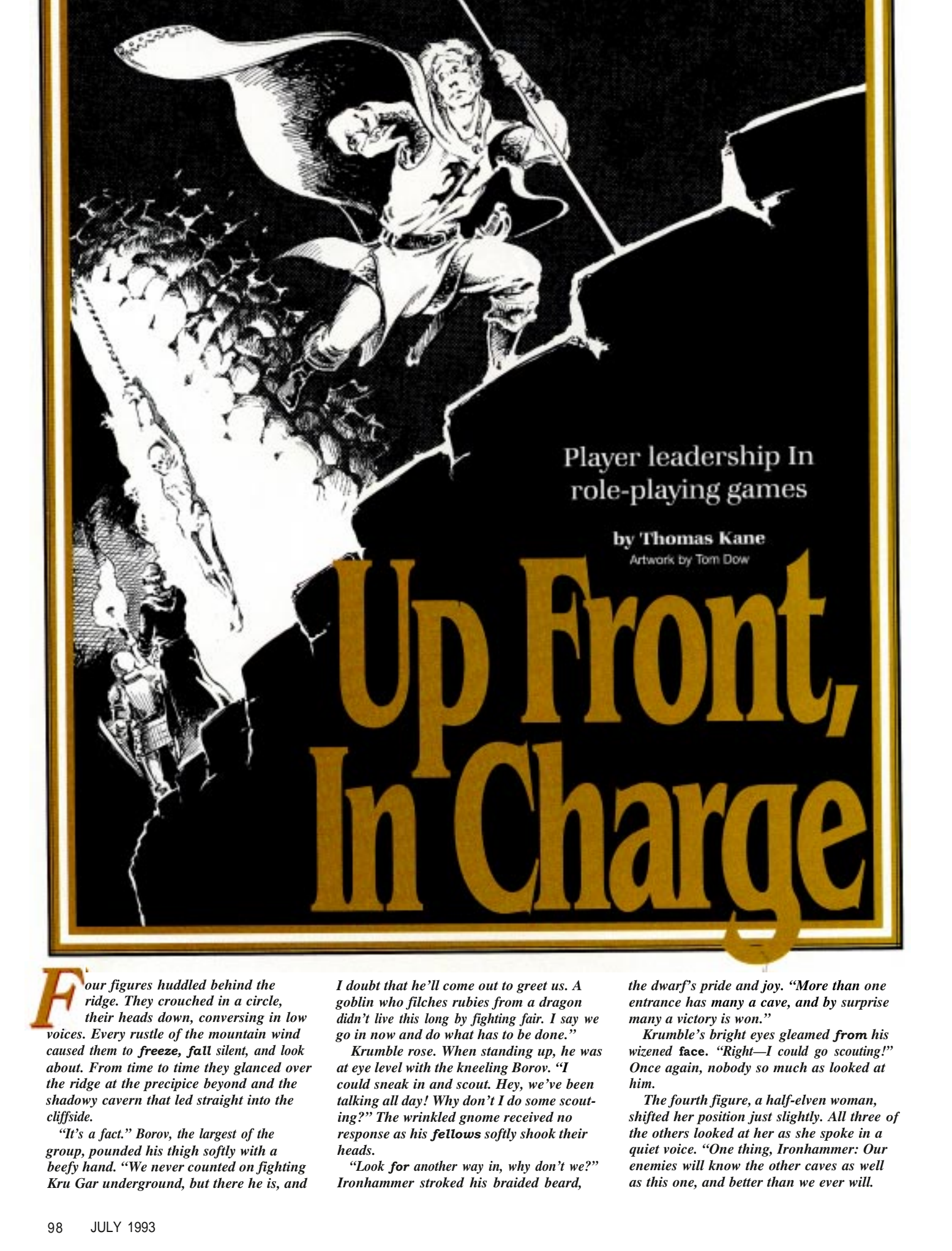
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Player leadership In
role-playing games

by Thomas Kane

Artwork by Tom Dow

Up Front, In Charge

Four figures huddled behind the ridge. They crouched in a circle, their heads down, conversing in low voices. Every rustle of the mountain wind caused them to freeze, fall silent, and look about. From time to time they glanced over the ridge at the precipice beyond and the shadowy cavern that led straight into the cliffside.

"It's a fact." Borov, the largest of the group, pounded his thigh softly with a beefy hand. "We never counted on fighting Kru Gar underground, but there he is, and

I doubt that he'll come out to greet us. A goblin who filches rubies from a dragon didn't live this long by fighting fair. I say we go in now and do what has to be done."

Krumble rose. When standing up, he was at eye level with the kneeling Borov. "I could sneak in and scout. Hey, we've been talking all day! Why don't I do some scouting?" The wrinkled gnome received no response as his fellows softly shook their heads.

"Look for another way in, why don't we?" Ironhammer stroked his braided beard,

the dwarf's pride and joy. "More than one entrance has many a cave, and by surprise many a victory is won."

Krumble's bright eyes gleamed from his wizened face. "Right—I could go scouting!" Once again, nobody so much as looked at him.

The fourth figure, a half-elven woman, shifted her position just slightly. All three of the others looked at her as she spoke in a quiet voice. "One thing, Ironhammer: Our enemies will know the other caves as well as this one, and better than we ever will.

Before we go on with our arguments, I'd like to remind everyone that anyone in that cave may know we're here, and may be preparing traps for us even as we speak."

Borov scratched his jaw. "If you're right, Katerina, that makes it all the more important that we attack now, before they can make their ambush complete. Let's—"

Ironhammer sighed. "Limestone, this is. The very country of caves. Why charge in the front way when we can go in by the back?"

Borov nodded thoughtfully. "Then perhaps you would care to take a back route while the rest of us assault from the front. We could thus catch them between hammer and anvil, as you dwarves might say."

"split the party." Katerina rolled her eyes. "Wonderful idea."

Ironhammer turned toward her. "It was at least a suggestion, milady, which is more than you have offered us at this moment."

Borov furrowed his brow as he looked around. "Where has Krumble disappeared to, anyway?"

Ironhammer spat. "With a gnome, who can tell. Anyway, talking I was. Limestone! The drip of water creates not just one cave, but hundreds—"

At that point, the clatter of distant falling stones interrupted the argument. Footsteps and harsh voices came from the direction of the caves, beyond the ridge.

Katerina, Borov, and Ironhammer raised their heads to look over the ridge. Torches flared in the cave entrance. Krumble scrambled out of the cave, tripped over a rock, and regained to his feet as he kicked stones in every direction. He took off at a dead run toward his companions.

Behind Krumble, more figures emerged from the tunnel mouth. First one, then another, then dozens of hunchbacked figures loped into view. The spindly forms carried weapons ranging from curved swords to great crossbows loaded with multiple bolts.

Krumble shouted as he ran. "Hey, everyone, I went scouting!"

There comes a point in every role-playing adventure when a leader must appear. Someone must choose a plan and rally the others to accomplish it. Without such a figure, either chaos or quiet apathy comes to dominate the party. At best, the team stumbles unimaginatively through the adventure, surviving by sheer luck and game master's grace; at worst, the group splits up, making catastrophe inevitable. The following article offers suggestions for those bold enough to take charge.

Person of the hour

When the party needs a leader, what it really needs is an idea. The most important characteristic of leadership is not the ability to give orders, but the ability to decide upon a course of action. The leader's plan need not always be brilliant.

Indeed, other PCs may have already suggested the same idea. However, most people are either too shy to make the proposal heard or too wordy to make their ideas understood. A leader must present the idea simply enough and firmly enough so that the entire party knows what to do.

The leader's proposal must be extremely simple. When one's basic plan is short, other players can use it as a starting point for plans of their own. Far from restricting the rest of the party's freedom, a skilled leader gives the other adventurers opportunities for creativity.

At times, a master plan may involve a great number of steps. In these cases, one need not reveal the whole plan at once. Tell the rest of the party what you want to do immediately but do not explain any more of the reasons than you must. This is not a matter of keeping secrets from the party; it is a matter of keeping the party's attention on the business at hand.

Sweating, Ironhammer leaned on his axe. Six gray, deformed corpses lay about him. Krumble crouched in the shadow of a rock, silent. Borov sat upon a stone, tightening a reddened bandage upon his arm.

Katerina stood erect and silent. Her eyes darted first in one direction, then in the other. Nothing stirred in the ravines below. Then she boosted herself over the rock as lightly as a cat. Standing atop the ridge, she looked down at the others. "You wanted to go in. Well, come on. I'm going in now."

Borov groaned, but he also rose to his feet.

"Limestone, this is. Another entrance we'll find." Ironhammer tapped his axe on the ground.

Krumble shivered. "What's going on here, anyway? We aren't going back, are we? I mean, I've been in there, and it was a little dangerous, y'know."

Katerina strode on without another word. At the mouth of the cave, she flicked her eyes backward. Her three companions trailed along after her, picking their way through the rocks.

Borov cupped his hands around his mouth and shouted, "They'll surely have reinforcements!"

Katerina looked at Borov for a moment, her eyes serene. Then she turned to the cave mouth and raised her hands. Each of her fingers performed its own separate dance as Katerina intoned a verse beneath her breath, in a slow, rhyming cant. Then fire darted from her fingers, deep into the cave. The earth shook beneath her feet. Yellow flame and smoke blossomed from the cave mouth, accompanied by unearthly howl and shrieks muffled by intervening earth and stone.

Katerina turned back to Borov with a faint smile. "I was hoping for reinforcements." Then she strode into the caves. Her companions hurried to join her.

How to win friends and manipulate people

Once someone chooses a strategy, that person must convince his companions to follow it. In a formal organization, the commander can rely on official authority to make subordinates follow a plan. However, few adventuring parties recognize such a superior officer. Therefore, those who wish to rally a band of adventurers must master the principles of political behavior.

The first law of politics states that there is strength in numbers. When a lone person speaks, the audience may argue. However, once two people agree on something, other people tend to agree as well. Therefore, before proposing an idea to the entire group, one should mention the idea to individual PCs. Once one finds a few allies, the "alliance" can propose the idea to everyone else. The rest of the party will find such a proposal quite difficult to resist.

To locate supporters, one must analyze the personalities and abilities of other people in the party. Some people are natural allies. One must match people's natural tendencies to one's plans. For example, certain adventurers tend to support ideas involving combat while others prefer clever ruses or unusual uses for spells. In a campaign emphasizing role-playing, every character has aspirations and fears that a cunning analyst can exploit. Personal friendships can also lead to useful alliances. The same partner who guards one's back in combat may stand at one's side in a council of war. Therefore, it pays to cultivate at least one close friend within the party.

The more ardently a speaker supports an idea, the more other people tend to resist it. Therefore, crafty politicians work by indirection. Instead of declaring their intentions before the group, these leaders raise controversial issues in casual conversation and allow their friends to discuss the topic. Eventually, by pure chance, somebody else is likely to suggest exactly what one wishes to do. At that point, the leader can praise his friends for their cleverness and good ideas. Then, the group can work together to put the idea into action. By letting other people take credit for his ideas, a politician can make friends, avoid controversy, gain a reputation for listening to other people, and—as a final benefit—avoid blame if a plan goes sour.

Usually, once two or three people have a strong idea, the rest of the party quickly comes to agree. When this fails to happen, one must consider the reasons why. If the reluctant adventurers point out valid flaws in the plan, it is worth considering the possibility that they are right. However, when a group ignores a useful strategy out of laziness or perversity, the leader should attempt to sway the foot-draggers.

A bold speech can sometimes rally the party. The role-playing of such an event adds a great deal of color to the game. In other cases, a character has some tool to use against the rest of the adventurers, or at least against a single recalcitrant. The promise of gold may inspire a reluctant adventurer. A group's priest may command some attention by threatening to withhold the healing of the gods.

When one has no means to inspire the party one can still lead by example. If the majority of one's companions persist in floundering, one simply leaves them and does what needs to be done. With any luck, a leader can count on at least a few loyal friends to come as well. The sight of this group plunging into action often acts as a tonic upon the other players, inducing them to follow.

An evening later, the party camped outside the hills. They pitched their tent in the eaves of a pine forest. Midwatch passed, and Borov sat alone, his back against a mossy stone, his eyes searching the shadows between the trees. The moon set, leaving the forest in darkness.

Suddenly, Borov felt a presence beside him. He stiffened and turned left. A slim form stood next to him. Borov slid back and started to rise, but the figure placed a warm hand on his shoulder.

"Relax." The figure spoke in Katerina's deep, familiar voice. "I wish to speak with you."

Borov released a long sigh. "Ye gods, woman, don't surprise me like that. I nearly ran you through."

Despite the shadows, Borov thought he could see Katerina's face crinkle in a smile.

"I wanted to talk to you about the battle. We were very lucky."

Borov grunted. "We won. I suppose that's what matters."

"Mm-hmm." Katerina's voice was almost too soft to hear. "But if we continue to behave like decapitated chickens, it is unlikely that we will win again. I want to talk to you, Borov, because this group needs someone to guide it, someone to make its decisions—a leader."

"The gods' truth!" The large warrior coughed and spat.

"Borov, I think our leader should be you."

"Me?" Borov looked at Katerina with surprise and pleasure.

"You, Borov. You seem to have a grasp of strategy. And you seem to understand that a simple plan is best."

Borov chuckled with satisfaction for a moment. Then he stroked his jaw. "But they aren't going to listen to me."

"I will support you." Katerina's voice was nearly a whisper. "If they quibble, the two of us will act. And I think they will follow us."

Borov nodded. "Very well, let us do so. But why did you choose me to lead? Why not you?"

Katerina grinned. "If I have a good idea, I think you will listen to me, won't you?"

Party politics

Once a player begins showing leadership, one must consider the role-playing consequences. A leader can occupy any imaginable role within the party. In some circumstances, the PCs work for an organized institution, such as the armed forces, and have an established chain of authority. However, most adventurers develop styles of leadership on their own.

A player who is role-playing a party's chief should consider his character's background and decide how the PC reacts to the responsibility of command. If the leader is a warrior, he could be an aristocratic, gentlemanly officer or an earthy, wisecracking veteran. If the leader is a high priestess, she could be remote, calm, and compassionate, or fiery, sharp-tongued, and vindictive. Of course, an infinite number of other possibilities exist as well.

Other members of the party can find similar role-playing possibilities. The personalities of followers can be as interesting as the personality of the leader. Does a young warrior idolize the party leader, or does he respect the leader as "first among equals"? Perhaps a veteran adventurer groans and complains about the leader's orders. This griping may merely conceal the fact that the character admires the leader very much, but doesn't feel he can safely show it.

In a campaign with an extensive background, one must consider the characters' social positions. A medieval knight would normally resist taking orders from a common-born sorceress, not merely out of arrogance but because the situation would not seem natural to him. This could lead to insubordination. However, imaginative role-players can develop more interesting solutions. First of all, the sorceress could act behind the scenes, perhaps allowing the knight to pretend that he is in charge while in fact he is taking orders from her. The knight might also find magic so awe-inspiring that he does not think of the sorceress as a commoner, a woman, or even a human being.

The breakfast fire burned low. Ironhammer chewed on a greasy bit of sausage.

Krumble sat a few yards from the others, munching handfuls of parched corn from a stained gray pouch. Finishing his own meal, Borov stood up and kicked dirt over the glowing coals. The others glanced at him.

"Let's go." Borov looked at each of the others in turn. "We've destroyed Kru Gar's fort, and now it's high time we left this wilderness."

Ironhammer pulled his whiskers with a sneer. "Leave, say you? After but one battle? Till booty we've found I'll not be leaving."

"I could help hunt for it. I can help." Krumble spoke through a mouthful of kernels.

Borov sighed. "Now listen to me—"

"The king's bounty for this is what, one

hundred nobles? This pay, I can hardly call sufficient." Ironhammer spat and looked back toward the hills. "In coffers the gold awaits us to take it."

Krumble waved his arms in the air in frustration, trying to get someone's attention.

Katerina turned her eyes to Borov. "I'm ready to leave whenever you are. If Ironhammer wants to stay in the wilderness, that's his decision,"

Ironhammer spluttered. "Just an ore-picking minute—"

"Krumble," Katerina turned to the tiny fellow. "Could you go ahead—just a little way—and help us find a path to Howat's Field?"

"Yes—a good one." Krumble dropped his bag of food, got up, and scrambled into the trees without wasting a second. Only moments later, his head appeared above a bush. "This way, this way. We follow the stream to Ravenflow, and on to town."

Katerina walked off after him. Borov hoisted his pack and strode on by her side. Ironhammer came too, muttering under his breath.

Styles of leadership

The archetypal leader would be the most powerful or charismatic member of the party. This figure commands a little awe from the rest of the group. Other adventurers may admire or resent the leader figure, depending on the interplay of personalities. However, nobody doubts this leader's right to command, and an insult to this chief represents an insult to the entire party. This commander puts the brand of his personality upon every deed the party attempts.

The role of the heroic leader comes naturally to a warrior. Such a character may model himself upon some dashing, decisive officer of the army. Wizards or priests may also assume this position, using the power of their magic to compel respect or the blessing of the gods to justify their role of command. These classes also make the best followers for a powerful commander, because they know the importance of discipline and respect a dominant leader who will listen to their advice but leave them free to pursue the business of magic.

An authoritarian leader works well if he can support the role. The party's chief must possess a firm voice, a commanding gaze, a decisive mind, and a sterling reputation. This figure should also exercise power with moderation to avoid stirring up resentment. One must remember that everybody in the game deserves a chance to be a hero. Rivalries within the party create exactly the sort of chaos a leader is supposed to prevent. Some people have a natural air of command, but those who do not should use other methods of leadership.

Another form of leader is the benevolent patron. A druid or priest often uses

this style of leadership, but wise old hands in any character class can assume this role. This sort of leader remains aloof from many discussions, giving the party the freedom to do as they choose. When the party needs guidance, the patron offers a short, quiet suggestion. Such leaders often speak in riddles. Rather than giving direct instructions, they encourage others to think for themselves. The game master (GM) may wish to introduce a figure like this as a nonplayer character (NPC), more of a guide than a leader.

Some adventurers may wish to govern the party as a democracy in which the PCs vote on important issues. This system works most efficiently if someone acts as a moderator, hastening ideas to a vote to prevent endless debates before every election. The mechanics of elections may prove too formal for many parties, because many teams of adventurers can make decisions more smoothly by consensus.

Most role-playing adventure parties have no formal leader. Instead, the adventurers follow whoever has the best idea at any particular moment. Among friendly, cooperative people, this system works well. It avoids resentment and insures that the party always follows the person most competent for a given job. This system, like all others, has its role-playing consequences. Do the characters really see each other as equals? Does everybody always agree on whose idea to follow? How does each party member go about making himself heard, and how effective is this tactic?

The most effective leaders often act behind the scenes. They neither hold nor want titles. Instead, these adventurers have ideas, act on them, and inspire their friends to do the same. These quiet leaders are often delightful to role-play. They may be minstrels, sly rogues, clever youths, eccentric magicians, or old priests with far too much experience to waste time attempting to gain political recognition.

Less savory sorts of organization exist. One can have a dictatorial commander who forces the adventurers to obey through terror. One can also have a manipulative leader, who holds power by keeping the rest of the adventurers fighting with one another, or a leader who arranges the death or humiliation of all potential rivals, or rival cliques struggling for influence. Players should normally avoid these styles of leadership, as they seldom result in a fun game, but NPCs assuming these roles might prove interesting in a PC group (see examples later in this article).

When choosing a style of leadership, one should keep the following fact in mind. Conflict between characters is fun. Conflict between *players* is not. If two gamers have a real-life rivalry, try to keep them from using the game as a vehicle for their dispute. Changing the subject in a

conversation or changing the pace of an adventure can often defuse a personal feud before it starts. Preventing such friction is one of a leader's most important duties. If a player can do this while acting in character, she gives the game another dramatic touch.

Leadership and the NPC

Leadership techniques work for NPCs as well as PCs. Game referees can exploit this fact in two ways. First, the ambitions of NPCs make for exciting role-playing. Second, charismatic figures offer the GM a tool for controlling the game. Third, NPCs who attempt to play an active role in group politics seem far more like real people than those who simply react to the heroes' suggestions.

If the GM wants intrigue, backstabbing, and power plays within the party, would-be NPC "leaders" can provide it. It would ruin the game for PCs to betray and undercut one another, but NPC villains can freely engage in such nefarious behavior. Adventurers may kill or otherwise incapacitate the more blatant power-grabbers. However, a clever NPC makes friends as well as enemies, and takes care that his propositions always sound worthwhile. A seditious NPC should usually give good advice. He should always take care to cultivate PC allies for his plans. However, this character's suggestions should often include some stratagem to embarrass rival leaders and further his own influence.

The GM may also use charismatic NPCs to correct problems in the party. A courageous warrior might teach the heroes the virtues of working together in battle. If a new PC is at risk of being ignored, a wise old sorceress might speak up on his behalf. Any henchman traveling with the party can serve as the GM's agent in the game, to disrupt intraparty friction or veto a truly stupid plan.

The referee must avoid the trap of letting characters become mere mouthpieces. NPCs should always behave according to their own personalities and desires, regardless of the messages a GM wants to impart. As mentioned above, a warrior might give the party useful advice on teamwork. However, a free-thinking burglar might not. The burglar might, however, provide a negative example, disrupting party harmony so severely that some PC steps in and imposes order.

Once the GM establishes the NPCs as distinct personalities, he opens a variety of story opportunities. Each character should have individual virtues and flaws. An NPC may give good advice in some situations and bad advice in others. A brave henchman might rally the party from despair. However, a few weeks later, he may urge the party to do something perilously rash. Both cases can lead to exciting adventures. Both also force the party to treat NPCs like human beings.

The real leader

No matter who leads the party, the GM should be the real leader of the game. Game moderators must always keep their roles as NPCs distinct from their role as referees. An NPC may become embroiled in party disputes, but no GM can run a fair game without remaining aloof. One must also make sure that NPCs act according to their character, not according to what the GM already knows about the situation (which is almost everything). When henchmen or outsiders have advice for the party, it must be based on information that those figures might logically know—and it might not be very good advice at all. Adventurers deserve a chance to make their own decisions.

The GM must also keep an eye on the social environment. If the party cannot make decisions, the GM may wish to cultivate a PC leader. If, on the other hand, one PC dominates the game, the GM must give other characters a place in the story. Adventures should call for a variety of talents, giving everyone a chance to save the day.

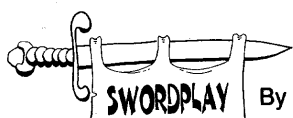
On some occasions, the GM must restrain a player who confuses decisive leadership with being a loudmouth. Never allow forceful gamers to dictate a quiet player's actions. No matter how loudly party members shout what they want a certain character to do, only that character's player can make the final decision. Furthermore, when characters have no way to talk to one another, the GM should firmly forbid players from giving one another advice.

The GM must also resist the temptation to "teach the party lessons." The GM need not feel responsible for everything that happens in the party, and he must not interject themselves into the action. The party's fate should be the logical consequence of its decisions, no matter what the GM originally had in mind. An encounter with a visible moral turns the game into a sermon that everyone will resent.

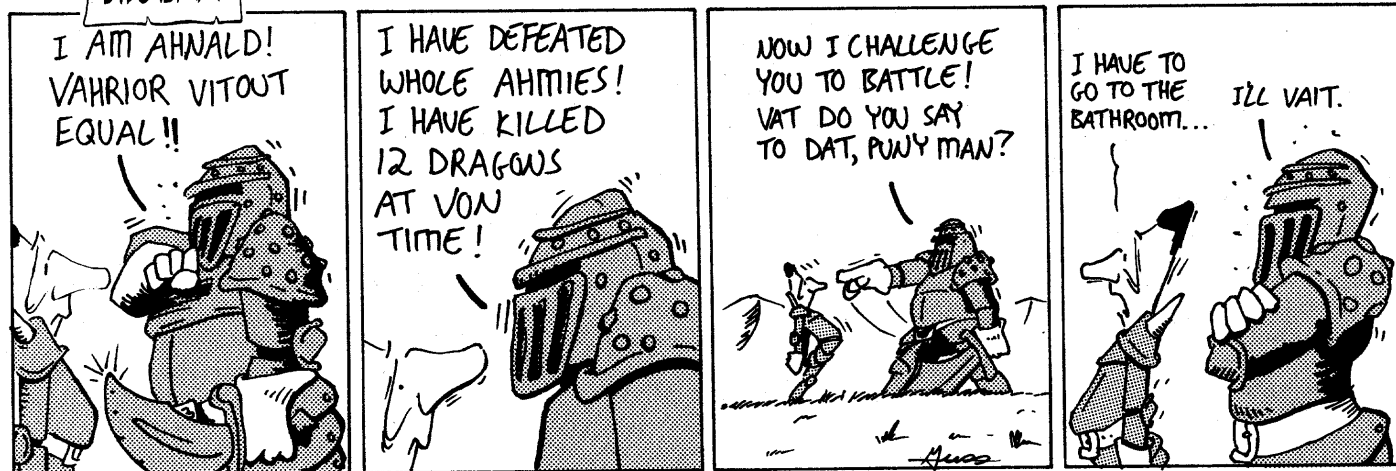
Final notes

This article's advice should improve both game-playing and role-playing. Games run more smoothly and the PCs win more battles when the party has cohesive plan. Furthermore, the appearance of a leader instantly creates a structure of social and political relationships between the characters. Any discussion of plans provides a focus for role-playing. A social pecking order gives characters a myriad of different ways to interact with one another. Roguish types may rebel, youthful adventurers may become shameless hero-worshippers, leaders may grow weary of their roles. All these things lead to an intriguing tale. Ω

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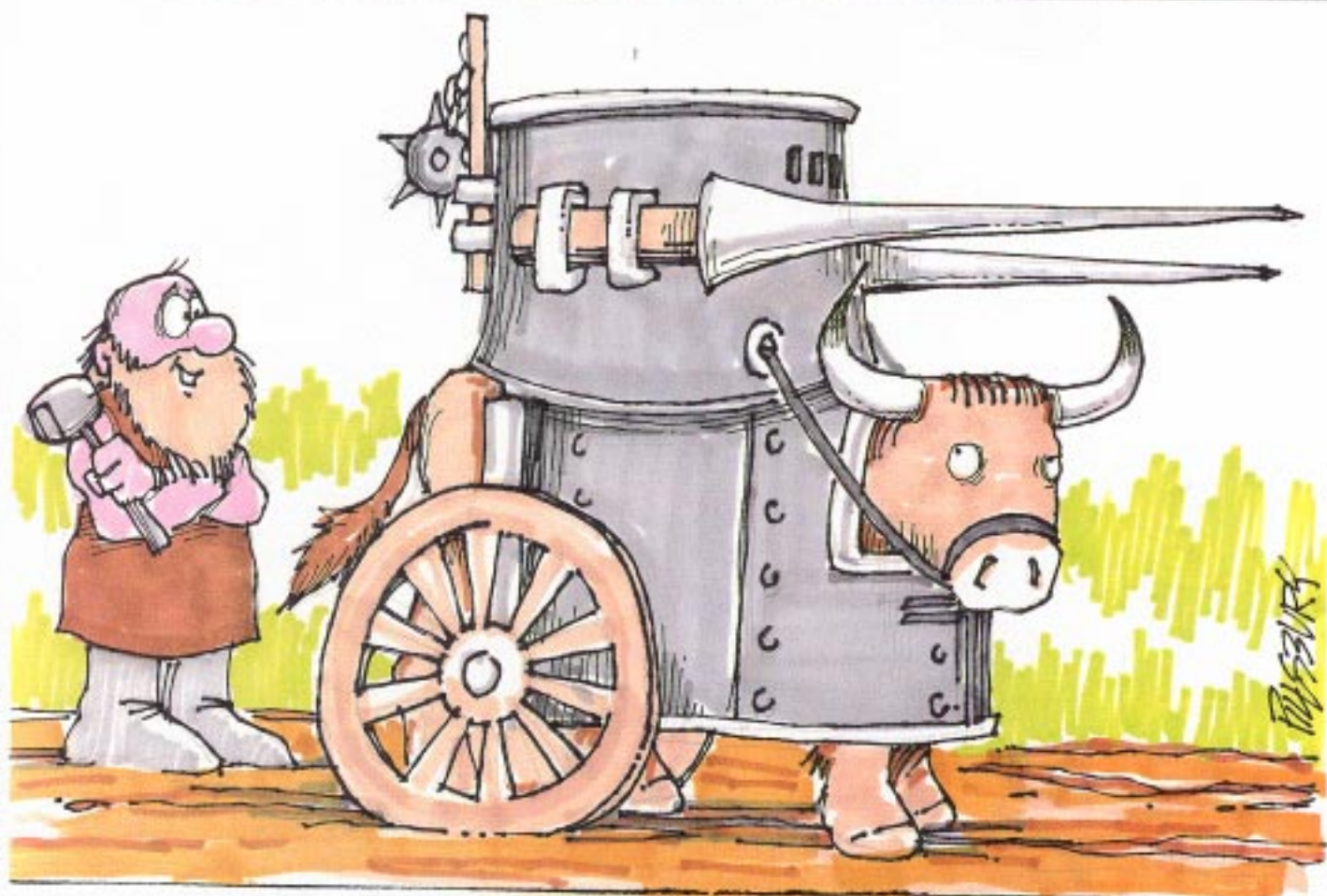
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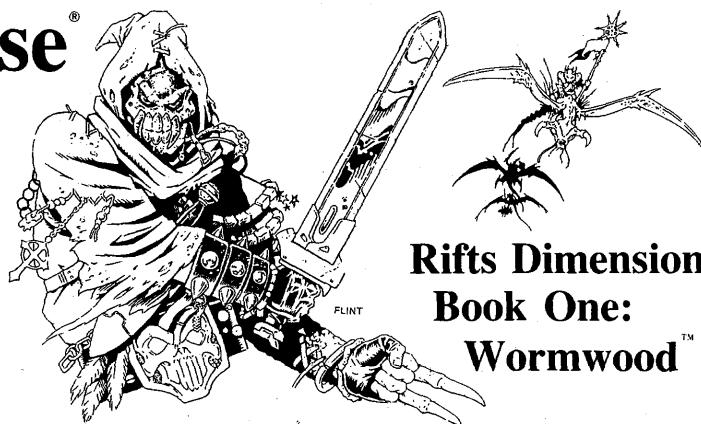
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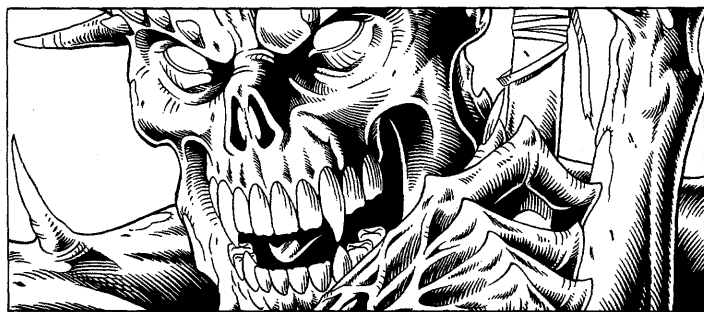
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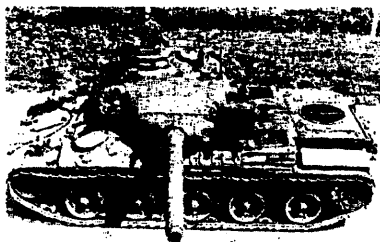
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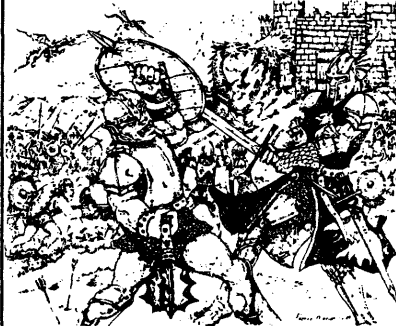
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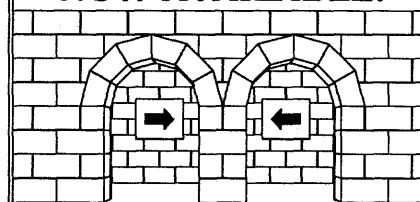
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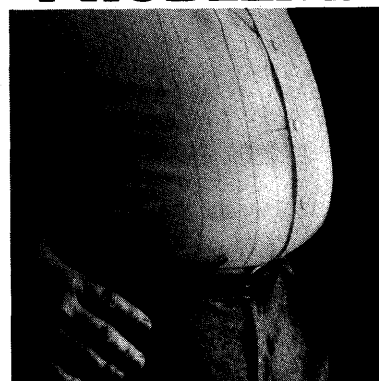
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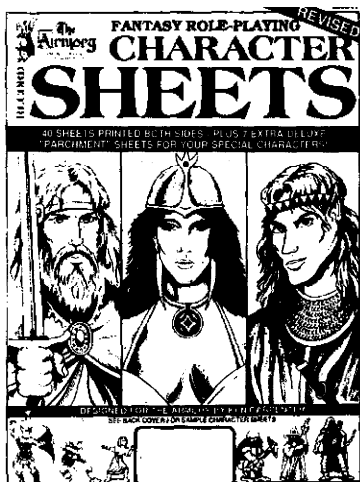
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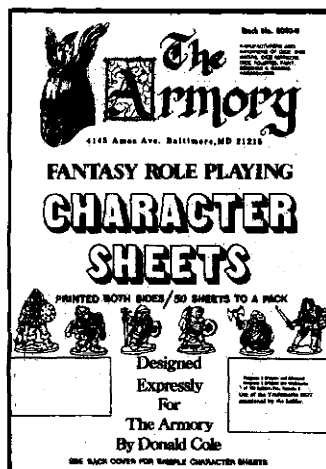
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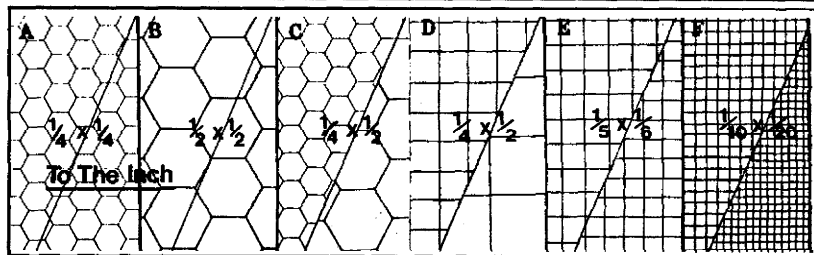
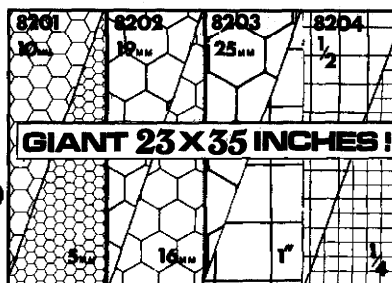
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Through the LOOKING Glass

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Mounted Knights (Lance & Laser Models)

Lead dragons and steel legions

As of my writing this in May, the lead ban continues to be on hold in most states. The setback from the faulty data that New York state used, and the bill that they created, has become a mold for other states. Studies will have to be done in a careful scientific manner to produce a valid conclusion on which to base a bill. This will take time and gives the miniatures industry a bit of breathing room. The downside of this is that some companies have raised their prices, in some cases significantly. These price increases affect not only the consumers, but they also hit the hobby shop owners.

Most hobby shops are owned by families and provide one-half or more of the family's income. These family stores feel the same concerns that the consumers feel with the rising costs. The average store owner makes between 35 to 40 cents per dollar. This money usually goes to pay

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

operating costs, new stock items, and the rest is used to feed his family, after paying taxes of course. Now when product prices rise, a whole new situation arises. If the shop owner chooses to increase his price as well, the consumer (you) pays more. If he chooses not to increase his price, he makes less money on each sale.

The choice the shop owner makes can affect your shopping in many ways. Your favorite store may run out of items more often as they are forced to decrease the number of each type of figure kept on hand. They also may have to cut down on the number of types and poses of figures that they carry, leaving you unable to find the one figure that you need. Others may drop some entire lines to avoid duplication, leaving you with a smaller selection to choose from, or may be forced to drop miniatures from his stock completely so he can stock new, less expensive selections. At least five stores that I know of in three states are pursuing that course, as they simply cannot afford the \$15,000 needed to convert their stores' inventory.

This situation is not all the fault of the miniatures companies but rather the culmination of the process started by the federal government several years ago. The industry has fought hard to protect our hobby, but the financial cost was tremendous and may have resulted in a Pyrrhic victory. We need to remember that everyone is hurting financially, and it may not be the shop-owners' fault that your shopping is not quite as enjoyable as it once was. If he has cut back, ask him if he can order product for you, and be patient as it may take them some time to get enough to place a minimum order. Try to find out what is coming out and order ahead so they can cut costs by ordering what you want. With a little bit of work and understanding, all of us will make it through is time.

I want to thank the following people for

their help in providing you with colorful work to fill our belated anniversary piece. They are: Eric Petersen—Lance and Laser Knights, Thunderbolt Mountain's King Arthur, Gigantic Green; Keith Piske—Durin's Doom, Base and Dragon, Grenadier Wyverns (both large and small); and Bryant Berggan who headed our group of playtesters, which included Ron Walton, Steve Casperson, and others. Now on with the reviews!

Reviews

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The figures in the PENDRAGON* line all have the dubious distinction of simply being labeled as Mounted Knights, with the only difference in their description being the numbers. These figures also can be used as units in a command group.

P-005 Mounted Knight *****½

This is a three-piece casting consisting of a horse and rider on an oval base. The horse is of medium size, with a simple unpadded saddle and full tack. The wide straps are joined by studs and are raised far enough off the horse to allow easy painting. The horse is just over 20 mm from nose to rump and 27 mm tall. The horse appears to be stepping back sharply from some object, with head slightly down, ears up, and tail straight down. The front left leg is raised while the back is bent. The horse's nostrils and eyes are very good, and the mane is clearly seen as being combed to the right.

The rider sits astride the horse with his right hand holding the reins and the left providing a perch for a falcon or a hawk. He is 24 mm in height from feet to eyes and is slightly short. He is dressed in a long surcoat that stretches over his knees, Low boots and tights cover his legs; a long cape covers his back and is fastened by a clasp. His hair is curled at the ends with strands visible; the center of his head is covered by a cap. Facial detail is present but must be carefully painted, and the knight does not appear to be happy. His right hand is bare and his left is covered by a thick glove. The bird has very shallow detail and could be painted to represent your taste in hunters.

This is an excellent figure to have for a hunt diorama or as a messenger for a combat group. The figures seat well and are worth the \$3.50 price tag for the pack.

P-006 Mounted Knight *****½

This unarmored knight is dressed in a button-down leather tunic or coat of plates complete with saw-toothed fringes at neck and hips, encircled by a link belt. His legs are covered by tights, and his feet are covered in low boots with long pointed toes. A

long cape falls from his shoulders and fans out across his horse, while the wrinkles show extra attempts at producing a "relaxed" look. The cape is secured by a chain stretched between two gold studs. The knight's hair falls to mid-neck and is gathered by a thong headband. Facial features are clear, even if he is a bit bug-eyed, and there is a look of concentration on his face. A hunting horn is held in his left hand and is raised to his lips. A bracer and gloves complete his dress. This figure is also slightly shorter than 25 mm.

The horse is 28 mm high and 33 mm long and is mounted to an undetailed oval base. This horse has its head tucked down with its right leg raised. The stranded tail hangs straight down, and the mane falls thickly to either side from its center part. The eyes appear to be almost closed. A very simple saddle or blanket and minimal tack adorn the horse. The one detraction is the horse's almost slablike muscle structure.

This figure appears more at home with the woods and suggests a number of scenarios, or could act as the trumpeter or signaller for a unit, and is recommended at \$3.50 per pack.

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#1018 Gigantic Green Dragon *****

This dragon consists of 12 different lead pieces that, when joined, form a dragon that stands at 103 mm tall by 230 mm long from the tip of the nose to the bent and hooked tail. The miniature is free standing with no base included. The parts include two paws, two arms, two legs, a tail, a body, two wings, a neck, and a head. Each wing is over 100 mm in length!


This is a craft kit that will need some experience and patience to assemble. The tail and neck assembly fit together exactly and require only minor fill. The head slipped on easily, and the spines were easy to work around. Tooth detail was excellent, with individual needlelike teeth clearly evident with spacing to paint them easily. The plate detail was excellent and the scales were deep. The head is oddly shaped, and after due consideration, we have decided that it resembled that of a rattlesnake, including the closely protected and slightly hidden eyes.

Ownership of a pin vise and knowledge of its use is a definite plus if you intend to build this kit. The wings are impressive, but our miniature had insufficient slots in the body in which to insert the wings. The wings and body needed to be pinned (drill a small hole in the body and wings and then insert a metal rod—this adds support and strength) and braced to dry correctly. The left arm mounting nub was missing but was repaired by filling the

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Gigantic Green Dragon (Thunderbolt Mountain)



Arthur, King of the Britons (Thunderbolt Mountain)

joint and filing. The major problem was that the feet went on at strange angles and tended to be fragile during movement and display. We found that adding a slight bend to the back of the tail allowed the dragon to "stand up" to almost any party.

The figure is excellent when finished, and the absence of a base contributes to rather than detracts from the figure's utility. Equally at home on the battlefield or as a diorama, it is well worth the \$25.95 price tag.

#3000 Arthur, King of the Britons *****

Few kings live on in legends as does King Arthur. This 25-mm multi-piece cast-

ing is made of a nonlead-based metal that is more expensive but has good details. The horse mounts to an undetailed rectangular base that could be epoxied or lightly treated for a stable base. The horse is folly barded from neck to ground in pleated cloth barding. Visible barding consists of a girth strap, head harness, and ornate reins. The horse is stepping with the left front leg and the action is good. The mane is thick and arches to either side of the neck, and the tail hangs down. Eyes, nose, and mouth are anatomically correct, and the ears are up. The lower half of the mounted Arthur figure is molded onto the horse, and the upper is a

separate casting. His hand is weaponless, and I suggest the use of a pin vise to allow it to accept a mace, as Excalibur is sheathed. His cape drapes realistically over the horse, and the figure is identically dressed to the standing version below.

The standing version requires no base and is molded striding ahead with the right foot forward. He is dressed in a creased white gown cinched at the waist by a wide-linked belt and hemmed at the bottom with a wide studded band. Excalibur's sheath shows beneath the dragon-embossed shield on his left arm. His body is clothed in chain mail, visible at the arms and neck, and his right hand is open to accept a weapon. A metal shoulder guard supports a long cape, and a necklace with a symbol of office is on his chest. He stares out passionately and with great detail from a finely chiseled face.

The set also comes with several different weapons made of a nonbending material. You will need a cutter to remove these from the sprue. The set is a bit expensive, but the excellent detail makes it worth \$6.98.

Heartbreaker Miniatures

P.O. Box 105
Folsom PA 19033

#6001 DRAGONFIRE* Introductory ^{****½} RPG

The DRAGONFIRE* game is billed as an exciting introductory role-playing game that uses miniatures to spark interest. When I was given the game to review, I looked forward to an innovative system in the tradition of Heartbreaker Miniatures. Upon opening the game and examining the rules, I was disappointed.

The first thing that grabbed my eye was a group of well-detailed room and hall markers on heavy cardboard. These tiles were detailed with cracks and different wall textures and could be used outside of the game. The next objects to grab me were four sets of four brightly colored plastic figures that represent the bad guys. The hard plastic allows you to put a finish on them that will stick and not chip. The figures are scaled to 28 mm and are caricatures of creatures rather than accurate models. The Darklords wear robes covered with skulls, and are bald and armed with big swords. The trolls are squat and armed with spiked clubs, and the orcs are lightly armored and armed with swords. Even the knights look more like Chaos warriors.

You are one of four "Dragon Knights," delving deep in a dungeon in search of the evil Darklords. You must defeat these Darklords along with orcs, trolls, and various traps.

Appearances can be deceiving. Unfortunately, this great-looking game proved to be monotonous and limited. With only three kinds of opponents and a weak

combat system that leaves too much to chance, the game failed to hold our attention. We had one player leave the table after five minutes.

I felt this game didn't live up to its potential. If you're looking for a good introductory game, look elsewhere unless you're going to deal with young people. This is not recommended at \$24.95. This game probably will be used to entertain the very young visiting our club, and the cardstock floors will make good dungeons for our AD&D® campaign.

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#1675 BATTLETECH* Recognition Cards *****

While trading card-style products do not qualify as miniatures, these 2½"x3½" cards certainly qualify as miniatures accessories. The 160 cards cover the contents of the 3025 and 3050 Technical *Read-outs* and give brief explanations about different houses and clans. The cards are color coded as to book and tonnage as well as having stats and some variants on the back. The fronts of the cards have a color illustration of the 'Mech from a head on perspective. FASA has even included combat-value costs to keep sides balanced.

These cards can be used to help speed miniatures battles. Purchase several sheets of the plastic trading-card holders, and place the cards representing members of a lance together in a row. By using the pockets, you can store material about each 'Mech's efficiency or problems encountered in the campaign games you play. If you are a beginner, you can use the cards to identify enemy 'Mechs and pick weapons to use. Even the color schemes on the front help, although a lighter background would have been nice. These cards are well worth the \$20.00 price tag and easier to carry around than the books.



Legions of Steel (Global Games Co.)

Global Games Company

1666 St. Clare Ave. West
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M6N 1H8

#1000 LEGIONS OF STEEL* game *****

My initial exposure to this game was the arrival of four SF figures wrapped in foam and a note from RAFM announcing that these pieces were from a new game designed by Global Games called LEGIONS OF STEEL*. The figures are scaled for the larger 25 mm scale and are made of lead. The originals for these pieces were sculptured by Tom Meier and reflect a great deal of detail for a generic game piece. The Marines are dressed in suits of armor complete with teardrop streamlined helmets, instruments, wide visors, extra shoulder armor and joint protection, along with visible strength-enhancing cables. The back is a much more open armor, banded with the outer shell joined by straps. Both units sport virtually identical environmental and communication backpacks. The standard trooper is molded looking to the left with his blaster pointed left, while the heavy-weapons trooper points his plasma projector straight ahead. There are two heavy-weapon figures and six trooper miniatures. These troopers also have grenades magnetized to their shoulder armor.

Their robot opponents resemble undead metallic skeletons and have just as much independent thought. Bands of metal control the "muscles" that look like bones and the head is a gleaming skull with electronic eyes. Each is armed with a weapon that looks similar to a compact assault rifle. They are also equipped with Nachtmacher grenades that spread a zone of complete blackness, their version of a smoke screen. There are ten of these figures, and they are taller and more intimidating than the commandos. The Mark I Assault Fiend is the closest a robot could come to being a cyberdemon. The figure is over 35 mm tall even crouched over.

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You read about him in image comics, now play him in the role-playing game. Feel the excitement & thrill of using MAXX against his most foul of enemies. This book gives the statistics, and info, of MAXX & his supporting cast. There's everything you need to know to role-play the MAXX. This book comes with a complete adventure, & NEW MAXX art by SAM KEITH! This adventure supplement is part of the Universal Comic Book Adventure System.

EXCEL



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Legions of Steel (Global Games Co.)

The head has six horns and a reptilelike face. The left arm ends in a molded-on napalm thrower, while the right grasps a disrupter trident. The feet consist of three-toed armored talons that tightly grip the ground, and legs that have two knee joints. Armor plating covers the chest, shoulders, and back leaving only the abdomen and a ridged spine open to view. No flash was observable on any of the figures in the set. Now, let's move onto the game itself.

In the distant future, Earth is forced to accept the United Nations as a global government by the presence of a league of aliens. This league and the entire galaxy are threatened by robotic invaders who entered via a rift and are known as the Legions of Steel. While the Legions' factories turn out more robots the alien league throws Commando Sections against the robotic centers. These Earth military men are the league's chief weapon and best hope.

Visually, this game screams "Play Me!" from its darkly menacing box art and packaging graphics to the detailed interlocking puzzle pieces that map the machine complex and tunnels. Throw in superior internal art in the instruction

book, easy to follow illustrations, and the slightly outlandish but impressive miniatures and this game means business.

The game is fast and intense. A typical scenario can run as short as 10 minutes, and it is an even fight. We did appreciate the wealth of tactical options: rapid auto-fire, cover fire, suppression fire, and the availability of three different types of grenades.

The mechanics are simple and the sequences logical, making the game move quickly. Leadership rules require constant thought to maintain an edge. The game is evenly balanced, with both sides taking heavy casualties in almost any scenario. The robots outnumber the humans and have the heavyweight: the Assault Fiend. The commandos have superior weapons with better hitting ability and the leadership points allow for extra actions or improvement of odds in a fire phase by increasing the chances to hit. Results come down to better strategy and luck.

I find the main problem with the game is its limited scope. I'd like to see more weapons, more grenades, more and varied units and a greater variety of scenarios. A supplement or several supplements would greatly increase the value of the

game. It looks like *Terminator*, plays like the WARHAMMER 40K* game, and feels like a cross between *Aliens* and *Full Metal Jacket*.

I learned the game in less than 20 minutes which is a big help when game time is limited. The little storylines could easily become an interesting group of novels, and I could already suggest that the scope of the game could be increased by using Space Knight figures from Ral Partha. Weapons would have to be agreed upon, but the figures fit and the psionics could be machine crystal.

In spite of the price tag, I highly recommend this game. The only failing of our set was the doubling of one piece and the absence of another that required some scenario adaptations. They are correcting the problem, and I feel that the game is worth the \$59.95 price tag—especially the figures and heavy printed pieces that should last for a long period and can be used with other rule sets.

Grenadier Models Inc.

P.O. Box 305
Springfield PA 19064

Grenadier Models U.K.

25 Babbage Rd.
Deeside Clwyd, Wales
UNITED KINGDOM CH5 2QB

The next two miniatures share a common lineage. Both miniature kits are of wyverns in various stages of life. These wyverns differ from standard wyverns in head shape and facial features. William Watt has designed his wyvern to resemble the carving found on the west portal of Notre Dame, but evolved it into a tougher opponent. He has titled these "Greater Wyverns."

#3115 Young Wyvern

****½

The Young Wyvern is a member of the Fantasy Legends line. The kit is a two-piece lead casting of a forming wyvern. The figure is 100 mm from end of beak to stinger, and has a wingspan of over 100 mm. Wings fit cleanly into slots in the body, and the wings' leather webbing is visible between the bony framework. The stomach consists of typical reptile skin, and the back has overlapping plates protecting the spine. The horns are budding. The ears are small and cover only a small section of the head, which has a combination reptilian/avian look. The tail has not yet formed its stinger. Even the taloned feet are small on the oval base. At 50 mm tall, this figure is a danger to a party, but not a mortal threat. At \$6.95, this figure is expensive albeit chunky, but could be used as bait to catch the mother below.

#2902 Wyvern

****½

This eight-piece lead casting is everything that the little wyvern can hope to



Wyverns (Grenadier Models)

grow into. The creature is 165 mm from tail to the point of its beak and has a leaner, angrier look. Legs fit into holes on the base (the feet) and must be lined up carefully with the body. There are small gaps that are easily filled here at the wings' junction with the body. The wingspan has more than doubled and the wings filled out more in classical dragon style. The upper head contains fully extended adult horns and a lengthened and strengthened beak open partly in a scream of rage. A tongue tests the air while the long ears listen for threats.

The faults of this model were: the tail section, and two holes about 3-5 mm in size in the ventral scales of the torso. The large dorsal scale at the joint of the torso and tail was disfigured and mostly missing.

This miniature has good deep details and is easy to paint. Our tail section had excellent detail for the full length, including the stinger, but had shrunk slightly so that the body and tail section were of different diameters. This can easily be fixed by small amounts of putty, but you may lose some detail. It is a hard choice to make, and the miniature is well done. Its price is \$16.50 and I feel it is worth it.

Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.

5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati OH 45212-1197

Minifigs

1/5 Graham Road
South Hampton
ENLAND SO2 OAX

#10-420 Clutch of Fear

****½

The miniature starts life as an 18-piece lead kit. The figure is just shy of 280 mm



in length through its curls and stands 135 mm tall to the tip of its extended ears. The figure uses a two-piece rock pile as a base. In a depression of this base is a golden treasure and three dragon eggs molded in. The base has good separation and it is easy to see different objects. The spikes on the tail and neck of the female dragon were drilled shallow and had to be cleaned out to fit. This figure had some serious shrinkage in spots including tail and neck. These spots can be cleaned up with careful application of putty. We left these spots so you would see them. The figure is poised with a scream coming from its mouth and paws reaching forward to claim an egg. The wings are almost straight up and should be pinned. Scale detail consists of smooth skin with a pebble finish intermixed. Teeth, eyes and nose are all well formed. The back fins on the tail need some work, but this dragon

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Clutch of Fear (Ral Partha)

does give the impression she's steamed.

The objects of her attention are two male humans who are making off with one of her eggs. The egg holder is a two-pole stretcher supported by a tightly stretched but small blanket. Both egg thieves have highly landscaped bases. The first thief has a look of concentration as he runs forward. He is wearing knee-high for-trimmed boots and a leather jerkin with studded hem and pants. He is not visibly armed except for pouches on his thick belt. There is a mustache but no beard. The second thief is panicking, and his bearded face peers over his shoulder

at the oncoming mother dragon. His light jerkin is partially open and his vest is bunching. He strides forward in knee waders and is in danger of tripping.

This is one of those cute scenes that would make a good Mother's Day gift next year, as you may need some time to complete it. This is recommended even at \$20.95. Remember to check to see that your dragon is not side heavy, and that the base bottom is level. Be patient and enjoy.

#10-465 Durin's Doom

This is one of the first of Ral Partha's large-area pieces to be cast in pewter alloy. The kit consists of 14 different castings. The rock outcropping has to be carefully cleaned and the opening slightly widened before it fits together. The rock faces are pitted and worn as if water-worn over the years. This weathering extends to the 125 mm x 53 mm base and appears to represent the floor of the cave or a large ledge. This floor is covered in a huge amount of detail and treasure. Gold coins share space with swords, hammers, and helmets. Vases and caps are overflowing with jewelry, and a partially open chest with clear hinges sits open revealing more riches. The sobering moment comes when you notice the human skeleton clutching a full sack in its bony hands.

Of the four adventurous dwarven

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Durin's Doom (Ral Partha)

thieves, only three of these are separate castings. Dwarf #1 sits on a ledge with his sword drawn, hoping to free a brother dwarf. A sword is clenched in his left hand and a large sack hangs from his right. Knee-high boots and pants cover his lower torso, and a fur-lined hooded cape falls from wide shoulders, and a large pouch hangs from his belt. A hat covers his head and a look of stoic determination is on his face. Even his beard swishes across his face.

Dwarf #2 is dressed in standard pants and shirt combination except for the fur-trimmed pillbox hat, a medium coat, and fur-trimmed boots. He is running quickly away from the scene, abandoning his friends to the dragon while he escapes with a large bag of loot slung over his shoulder, and his face reflects mortal fear.

Dwarf #3 is dressed in a long coat with boots and a fur-trimmed cone cap. A wide belt supports a small pouch on the right and a pair of sacks and a quiver of bolts on the left. A backpack filled with loot sits high on his back. He clutches a loaded crossbow in both hands and is aiming at the dragon while fear and concentration clash on his face.

Dwarf #4 is part of the dragon casting. He is being crushed slowly between the left arm and chest of the dragon. Intense pain is etched on the dwarf's face and he is struggling to break away. The dragon is over 240 mm long from nose to tail and 110 mm tall to the horns. The spines and horns are old and pitted as if this were an ancient wyrm. The skin is a mixture of pebbled and scale with huge plates protecting the back. Individual teeth are clearly seen, and the slightly elongated head is also covered with small stubby horns. The wingspan is 90 mm per wing,

and each wing has a tattered, torn appearance.

We did have problems during assembly. There was excessive flash on the dorsal scales. The joints of the tail did not fit and required excessive filing and filling. The joint for the neck and torso required drilling and pinning to sit correctly. The base has a deep mold line running around it, and the legs did not fit properly into the base.

This is another "careful assembly required" model with huge amounts of detail. Although the detail is there, this is more of a collector piece at \$39.95 each.

Next month, I plan on having a special set of reviews on products from companies attending the GEN CON® Game Fair. I invite any comments or suggestions you may have. I prefer you to call me because of time restraints, especially with the Game Fair fast approaching. You can call me at (708) 336-0790 MWThFr 2 P.M.-10 P.M. or SaSu 10 A.M.-5 P.M., or write to the following address:

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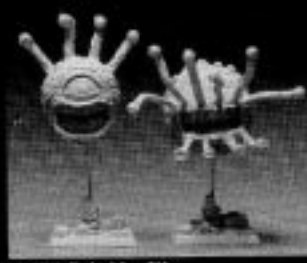
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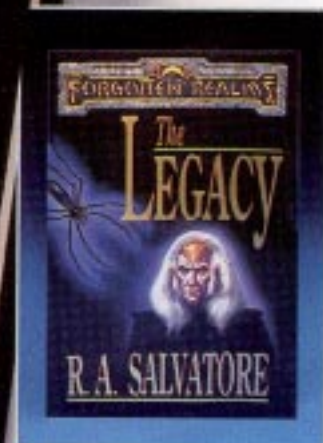
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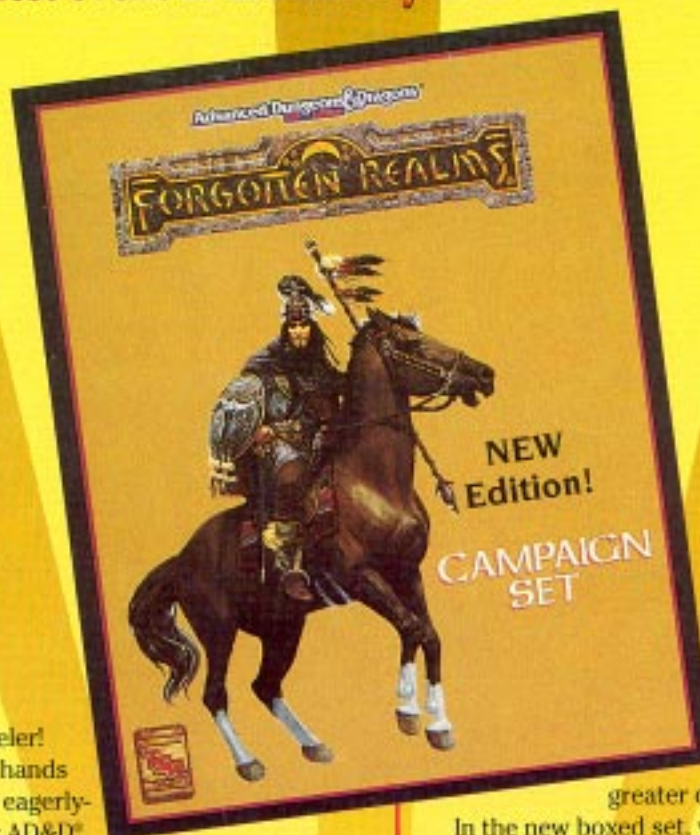
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